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Inside



Frank Ockenthauser, Carsten Nicolai and Olaf Bender of the Raster Noton collective (photographed in Berlin by Sebastian Meyer)

Regulars

Editor's Idea 4

Letters 6

Bitstream 10

Top little tattle from *The Wire* news ticker

Global Ear 18

In Sacramento, a noise festival tries to drown out the trumpeting of Arnie's election campaign

Charts 48

Out There 92

The pick of the month's festivals, concerts, club spaces and more

Directory 96

Plus Label Lore and Savage Pencil

Subscribe 98

Back Issues 100

Epiphanies 106

How Manchester gloom-mongers The Passage turned Nicholas Royle into a writer

Reviews

Index 49

Soundcheck 50

This month's record reviews

Print Run 74

New music books digested

Cross Platform 78

New DVDs by Chris Cunningham, Michel Gondry and Spike Jonze. Plus multimedia reviews and Savage Pencil's Inner Sleeve

On Location 82

Live reviews including the De Stijl Festival in Minneapolis, Julian Cope's Rome Wasn't Burned In A Day series, Dissonanze in Rome, and more

Wolf Eyes 24

Ann Arbor's trash 'n' burn electronic rock trio tap into The Stooges' nihilistic energy. By George Chen

Z'ev 26

Post-industrial percussionist continues to hack music's hidden codes from his new London base. By Ken Hollings

Luigi Russolo 30

The author of the Futurist *Art Of Noise* was the architect of 21st century aesthetics. Gary Lachman tells his story

'Blue' Gene Tyranny 36

Julian Cowley hears about transforming the piano from an unsung hero of New York's experimental scene

Raster-Noton 40

Sound sculptor and electro-minimalist Carsten Nicolai tells Ben Borthwick about the art of number crunching

Invisible Jukebox 20

Will Oldham

The Bonny Prince of Louisiana tries to master everyone from Squirebaird to Johnny Cash. Tested by Anne Hilde Nezet

Bites

Busdriver 12

Larsen 14

Ergo Phizmiz 16

Subscriber specials

For details of how to subscribe to *The Wire*, turn to page 98 of this month's issue or go to www.thewire.co.uk



With this month's issue of *The Wire*, all subscribers will receive a free copy of a new collection from the Raster-Noton label

Specially produced for *The Wire*, *Archiv 1* is a new and exclusive compilation featuring material released by the German electronic music imprint, Raster-Noton. Pressed on a transparent (c-thru) disc and sealed in an anti-static bag, the CD contains 19 tracks by the likes of Mika Vainio, Robert Lippock, William Basinski, Con/Christopher/Balance, Ryoji Ikeda, Noto, Signal, Komet, Senking and more. The CD is given away to all *The Wire*'s subscribers with copies of this month's issue. For more information on Raster-Noton go to www.raster-noton.de



With next month's issue of *The Wire*, all subscribers will receive a free copy of a new CD from Italy's Netmage festival

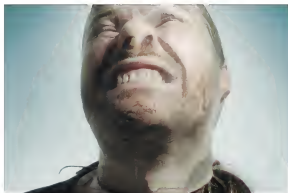
The fourth edition of Italy's Netmage festival, which takes place in Bologna between 21-24 January 2004, is subtitled, "Creative and innovative images in Art, Media, Communication". According to the organisers, the festival, which includes performances, workshops and conferences, is designed to function as an "international meeting point dedicated to Live Media". To coincide with this year's event, the organisers have produced a special CD featuring tracks by artists appearing at the festival, including Kim Cascone, Kontext Der Jünglinge (Thomas Köner and Asmus Tietchens), Rechenzentrum, Scanner, (The User) and more. The CD will be given away exclusively to all *The Wire*'s subscribers with copies of next month's issue. For more information on Netmage 04 go to www.netmage.it

Raster-Noton, Archiv 1 and *Netmage 04* are the latest instalments in an ongoing series of CDs which are specially produced for *The Wire* and given away to all the magazine's subscribers worldwide with selected issues of the zine. These CDs are only available to subscribers, and are not on sale with the magazine in the shops. If you are not yet a subscriber you can still get your hands on copies of both CDs by taking out a new subscription to *The Wire* this month. Just turn to page 98 or go to www.thewire.co.uk

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Letters

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Letters should include a full name and address



Not a pretty sight: Aphex Twin

Stocking filler

Congratulations on what may be the ugliest, most unpleasant magazine cover ever (Aphex Twin, *The Wire* 237). The dismal colours of a late autumn afternoon. The perverse thrashing head. Call me sexist, but another smiling Kim Gordon wouldn't go amiss. I suppose it was intended to be "confronting" was it? Pass the sickbag, geeks...

Gareth Davies via email

Poison Penman

Having first encountered Ian Penman's intelligent and informative commentaries on music in *NME* 25 years ago, I think that his review of Muslimgauze's *Arabbax* (Outer Limits, *The Wire* 237) is the worst Penman review I have read. He states that *Arabbax* is a reissue: this is correct, but it is a reissue of a CD first released less than a year ago – a repress would be a more accurate description. The recording had remained unreleased for ten years, like hours and hours of Bryn Jones's music.

His dismissive, over-punctuated sentence "...with Muslimgauze, we just tend to shrug and grudgingly smile as if to say: right: more Muslimgauze: uh, so what?" is rendered meaningless by the use of "we" rather than "I". Who is "we"? Is it a small cadre of politically unattached intellectuals who decide what music is acceptable and what isn't? Express an opinion, Ian, and use first person singular. To state the obvious, how one reacts to more Muslimgauze music depends on whether one likes Muslimgauze or not. We do, I mean, I do.

Penman notes that Jones never visited the "Middle East" and concludes that the war in Palestine, or Jones's view of the nature of the conflict, is a "phantasm" in his head. This is absolute nonsense. The state of the conflict in Palestine is not difficult to understand from a political perspective, nor is it difficult to understand the personal perspective of the Palestinian people. How one sees it, from afar, is

entirely and exclusively dependent on one's political outlook. Bryn Jones was absolutely sure about his political view of Palestine. He has stated that each collection of songs recorded was inspired by a specific event. To what degree the style and mood of Jones's music ("one long, near passive, escaped hiss of sadness," according to Penman) is solely an artistic expression of his political views is impossible to know and entirely irrelevant to the listener, and to speculate that the "sadness" in the music may be "pathological" and that there may be "personal scars" in Jones's life that have made an equal or greater contribution than his political views is to denigrate and dismiss the political views of Bryn Jones and the effect they had on his music.

The fact that Penman puts the word "birthright" in quotes makes it difficult to believe that he believes sincerely in what he is saying because it makes clear the agenda of the reviewer.

Bryn Jones was committed to supporting the fight for a Palestinian state; he maintained this view unequivocally throughout his adult life and he made clear his political outlook in his sleeveboxes and an interview. He was always entirely honest about his views and about his actions. Penman has tried to reduce the political passion of a composer to a mental fault; he has tried to belittle political commitment. Perhaps he thinks that the thousands of British people who demonstrated against the invasion of Iraq had had a bad day at work or had fallen out with a partner and wanted to express their personal frustration. Mr Penman, if you disagree with Bryn Jones's politics then say so, honestly and openly. The tactics you have used to attack his views suggest that you should apply to replace Alistair Campbell.

This is not the first such review of Muslimgauze in *The Wire*. Why are you scared of politics?
John Traynor Hobson Bridge, UK

I would like to complain about a review in *Outer Limits*, *The Wire* 237. Having bought the *Sigmatropic* album *16 Haiku & Other Stories* recently after strong

recommendations from various musicians, I was absolutely dismayed by the complete arrogance of Ian Penman's review. It seems to me that not only did Penman do a "rush job", but failed to mention anything about the band, the music or the poet (George Sefens) whose lyrics were set to music. I suspect he did not really listen to this album more than once. He even thought this album was a compilation!

Patronising comments about the content will not win you many friends. I wonder, is there some collective snobbery here, because the artist and poet are Greek? I think the music is excellent, and believe your readers would have benefited to learn more about the project and about the poet. Failing to mention that Sefens is a Nobel Laureate, and that all these amazing artists are singing on a sprawl of music that is far removed from their customary craft, is an indication that Penman made every effort not to admit that this is a commendable piece of work. Failing to acknowledge that a band called *Sigmatropic* performs the music here clearly indicates that his intent was to belittle the credibility of the album.

I bet you £100 that if the album was reissued to you in a few years time, under a fictitious moniker from some obscure American outfit, your reviewer would be more than enthusiastic. If the lives of Robert Wyatt, Lee Ranaldo, James Scavronas, Laetitia Sadier are happy to be on an album like *16 Haiku & Other Stories*, doesn't that indicate to you that the music must be – at least – great? Well, at least Penman enjoyed the packaging! Your arrogance sickens me and from now on I will treat your reviews with suspicion, or do some extra research. We love your magazine because of all the extra and insightful information, but on this instance you have failed us.
Edwin Copeland London, UK

Sigmatropic *Shot Bldy*, reviewed in *Print Run* (*The Wire* 237), seems like an amazing book. But because the review is by Ian Penman, I have no fucking clue what it's about.

Nadia Berenstein via email



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England's dreaming

Gavin Walker (Letters, *The Wire* 236) seems concerned that Death in June have been excluded from David Keenan's history of the 'English Post-Industrial Occult Underground', *England's Hidden Reverse*. He almost has a point. Although Keenan himself points out in the book's foreword that Douglas Pearce refused to be interviewed, DJ are still notable by their absence – especially since David Tibet and Douglas P collaborated extensively throughout the 80s and early 90s, and at one point Death in June and Current 93 were virtually indistinguishable.

Walker no doubt considers Death in June's quasi-fascist Goth dress to be profound and mysterious: it is neither. Rather it is the banal product of hollow symbol manipulation and preposterously vain egotism. Douglas P has been flogging the same old shit to consumers of fascist pornography for the best part of 20 years on the basis of the 'illicit thrill' that the group might be politically dodgy.

Quite apart from any ideological concerns, their music is awful: the early stuff sounds like Joy Division meets The Stranglers, with a drum machine; the later stuff like a third rate Nick Drake pastiche with added kettle drums and bugles.

I would suggest that the reason for the absence of DJ from Keenan's hagiography has less to do with some alleged sinister commercial manipulation by World Serpent Distribution and more to do with Keenan being kind enough to spare his subjects from the sheer embarrassment of being reminded of their intimate involvement in Douglas P's racist enterprise. A more critical writer wouldn't have let them get off so lightly: crap as they are, Death in June are undoubtedly an important part of the 'scene' Keenan claims to investigate, and an analysis of their involvement with the holy trinity of Current 93, Coil and (to a lesser extent) NWW, might have provided an uncomfortable counterbalance to the highly romanticised picture *England's Hidden Reverse* paints. **Jim Backhouse** London, UK

Lost recordings: slight return

Two things you please make Great Lost Recordings (*The Wire* 236) a regular visitor to your pages, with, perhaps, the added bonus of sleeve photos? Secondly, the Raymond Pettibon article (*Gross Platform*, same issue): the artist states that his group Supercussion "never recorded anything". Well, they did, actually! I have a 7" three track EP called *Rubbing Souls And Scratching Holes*. It was released on the American label Piece Of Mind back in 1992. **Steve Pescott** Emsworth, UK

Thanks for the great feature on Great Lost Recordings. Just wanted to point out to Alan Licht that *Mass Projection* is actually a duet by Kaoru Abe and Masayuki Takayanagi, not a New Directions Unit album. Maybe he confused it with *Free Form Suite*?

No so close that someone else appreciates the Gary Katz/Zach 1916 *Creative Nihilism* album too. I thought I was alone with this! **I Vekka** Finland

Naming and shaming

Misquoting the one and only lyric in the entire new LFO disc *Sheath* (Soundcheck, *The Wire* 236) is forgivable, but missing the occult-style spelling of "Ghettomaisak" and just plain old botching "Hoy Ya" (twice) in Dave Tompkins's review of the new *Outlast 12"* double pack is kind of ridiculous. Then again, having to deal with a glut of bands with unpronounceable names every month, it's a wonder your proofreaders don't crack up more often.

Katie Camber via email

Whitewash

Opening my copy of issue 236, I was pleasantly surprised to see actual faces to associate with the names and bios of the artists on *The Wire* Taper 10. I was also struck by the near-uniformity of their pallor.

While I have no particular problem with this fact, doesn't it seem surprising that a magazine with such a (seemingly) broad, aesthetic, global coverage could manage to put out a contemporary 30 track compilation containing a roster of near exclusively white artists? Did anyone else notice? **John Schampel** Tempe, Arizona, USA

Thoroughly modern and silly

Thank you for putting out the best widely circulated music magazine. Thank you for compromising so little and not marginalizing music and thought on music. The only problem I have is your slogan. Why 'modern', as in 'Adventures in Modern Music'? Your magazine surely isn't a history of pre-contemporary music? I'm guessing that you mean 'modern' in a common sense the way people might say 'Third World' to mean non-industrialised instead of the proper Cold War meaning, but I think your magazine is too smart for that. Why not hyper-modern, normet-modern or, God forbid, postmodern? Maybe we can create more respect for our generation by beginning to... respect it. Like finding rules in what was called nihilism (like readers of Nietzsche did) or embracing the freedom from styles that empowers an individual artist?

Ryan Tainter via email

Corrections

Issue 237 Rephlex Records would like to clarify that, despite Richard James's comment that he is no longer able to listen to every demo that gets sent in, the label's A&R department will still spin through everything they receive. In *On Location*, the photo at top right on page 88 shows Chris Weaver, not Max O'Brien as captioned. In *Cross Platform*, we printed the wrong URL for *The Diggers'* Website. The correct address is: www.diggers.org. Issue 236 In *Size Matters*, Byron Coley's review of Plan's *Randomizer* managed to spell turntable Luis Temudo's name wrong and make him Spanish rather than Portuguese. Apologies. □

Coming next month: 2003 Rewind, our annual survey of the best underground and outsider music of the past 12 months. Plus, all subscribers will receive a FREE copy of an exclusive new compilation from Italy's Netmage festival. See page 5 for details

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Director's cut: Don Letts

Filmmaker **Don Letts** has donated his entire collection of Super 8 films to the National Film and Television Archive. A major figure in the London punk scene, Letts was a DJ at the Roly club and these reels contain unseen and rarely seen footage, including live performances and backstage material. After restoration work, The British Film Institute plans to release the director's cut of Letts's 1977 film *The Punk Rock Movie* on DVD in 2005 >> The bassist, writer, broadcaster and academic **Peter Niklas Wilson** died on 26 October, aged 46. The *Total Music Meeting* 2003 in Berlin, which took place in early November, was dedicated to his memory. Wilson played and recorded with a wide range of musicians including American violinist Malcolm Goldstein, saxophonist Martin Pflüger and drummer Burkhard Biens. He was also the author of a number of acclaimed books on jazz and improvised music, including *Spirits Revealed: Albert Ayler And His Music* and *Sonny Rollins: The Definitive Guide* >> Brussels festival **Domino**, the self-styled "stubborn 10 day event full of rebellious talent", has already announced the first headliner of its 2004 programme, Einstürzende Neubauten, who are tipped to release a new record early next year. Each ticket holder for the show will receive a discount on one other concert in the series (although patience will be needed, as the rest of the line-up is being kept secret for the time being). More information at [>>](http://www.abconcerts.be) Refr Megacorp are releasing a six CD box set to mark the 25th anniversary of the **Art Bears**. The *Art Box* will contain the group's three original albums, digitally remastered, and a book of artwork, articles and interviews. Where it differs from most similar retrospectives is that it includes a two CD set of remotes and reworkings from the original multi-track masters, including versions by John Oswald, Andrea Rocca, The Residents and Christian Marclay. The final CD contains more reconfigurations of Art Bears material, together with live tracks. UK Beataphiles can find further information at

www.refrmeagcorp.com, while those in the US are advised to order copies through [>>](http://www.squidoo.com) **Will Oldham** has just finished composing a soundtrack for *Seafarers*, Jason Massot's documentary about seamen in Rotterdam, the world's largest port. In fact, Oldham liked the film so much he has not even asked for a fee (Hollywood composers take note). The documentary will be doing the rounds at international film festivals next year. More information can be found at [>>](http://www.jasonmassot.com) Manchester's Urban gallery hosts a major exhibition by graphic designer **Peter Saville**, the first large scale show in the city that launched his career. Over 500 items are on display, spanning three decades of work, and including examples of his massively influential sleeve and poster designs for Factory Records. The display demonstrates Saville's creative processes from conception to finished design and includes recent work in the music industry, and for clients in the fashion world. The show runs from 23 January to 18 April 2004. Further information can be found at [>>](http://www.urban.org.uk) The organisers of the **Big Sur Experimental Music Festival** are looking for unusual, improvising musicians "who want to collaborate with folks they might not know yet". Now in its fifth year, this is the second time the festival has been presented in a SoundShift format, with 70 musicians playing for 40 minutes each in a seven hour improvisation. The events will take place in the Henry Miller Memorial Library on 29 and 30 May 2004. More details at [>>](http://www.parecordings.com/News_events/soundshiftbigsur.html) That nexus of West Coast New Music activity **Other Minds** is looking for volunteers to preserve interviews and performances by some of the most significant composers, musicians sound artists and sound poets of the 20th century. The organisation owns approximately 6000 reel to reel tapes from KPFA Radio shows from 1960-1990 and is working on digitising them for preservation; this is done with a view to making them accessible via the

web-based RadioM.org, a radio station and Internet Music Service planned for November 2004, which will also feature streaming interviews with contemporary artists and performers. Audio engineers are needed to edit and convert the digitised files, and writers to catalogue the programmes. If you think you can help, contact Bernard Francis Kyle at bernard@otherminds.org. A special tenth anniversary Other Minds Festival takes place between 4-6 March 2004 at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco. Events include panel meetings and discussions, lectures, concerts, a film screening, a score auction and photographic retrospective of past festivals. For more information, visit [>>](http://www.otherminds.org) Taylor Deupree, founder of electronics label 12k, has turned his attention to experimental and alternative pop music emerging from the Japanese underground, with his new label **Happy**. Set to examine points between acoustic tunes to cut-up electronics, the label's debut release – licensed from the Tokyo label Cubic Music – is *Piano's Snow Blvd*. More information from [>>](http://www.12k.com/happy) Antipodean listeners to Classic FM will be disappointed that the station has chosen to axe **The Listening Room**. The show's innovative format, encouraging collaborations with Australian composers, musicians and writers, earned global plaudits for ABC Radio, including the 2003 Prix Italia for Music Programs, making the station's decision curious to say the least. Go to www.abc.net.au/classic/listeningroom for more info >> Pending the outcome of a lottery application to the Scottish Arts Council, the Scottish Ballet is set to relocate to Glasgow's world-renowned, multidisciplinary arts venue, **The Tronway**. If this goes ahead as planned, the venue's large exhibition space will be transformed into a set-building workshop. These proposals have prompted opposition from many artists, curators, gallery owners and teachers. Information and a downloadable petition against the move can be found at www.sosstronway.org.uk □

On a brisk autumn afternoon in October, Busdriver sits down on the concrete steps leading up to a playground on East Houston Street in Lower Manhattan. In an hour he will take the stage at the Luna Lounge, a small nightclub a handful of blocks away, with musical collaborators Radicallective and Daedalus. The occasion is a showcase being thrown by Mush, a Los Angeles based label specialising in unclassifiable post-millennial strains of HipHop, electronica and rock, as part of the annual CMU Music Marathon. But the demographics of the crowd that greets Busdriver and his friends, collectively known as The Weather, is strangely familiar — a collegiate, mostly white audience that politely takes in the group's mixture of live electronics and improvised rapping and appreciatively claps at the end.

The crowd only knew Busdriver from his recent work for Mush. Though only 25, the Los Angeles rapper comes from a different era. When he was 13, he started a group with some high-school friends called 429, named after the day the LA uprising in support of police brutality victim Rodney King began in 1991. Two years later he went to the Good Life Cafe, a now legendary venue that held open mic jam sessions back in the early 90s. Its alumni include groundbreaking artists such as Heavyweights Crew (Freestyle Fellowship), The Pharcyde and The Soulsides (now known as Quannum) crew. The former group would eventually abandon the Cafe for nearby Leimert Park and inaugurate Project Blowed, a weekly freestyle session from which sprung the 1995 Project Blowed compilation, a memorable snapshot of the city's underground HipHop scene.

A known performer in the LA area, Busdriver didn't appear on the national radar until his appearance on producer Fat Jack's *Cater To The DJ* compilation in 1999. His two tracks on that album, "Life Or Death"

and "Drive Safe", introduced HipHop fans nationwide to Busdriver's unique vocal: sputtering out phrases into a blurry stutter-step, chopped up rap flow so dense only a trained ear can make out the words. His voice was reminiscent of Bone-Thugs-N-Harmony, but his unique accent made it sound radically different, more like William Burroughs hopped up on crystal methamphetamines. But Busdriver shrugs off his speaking style as "pretty signature Project Blowed/Good Life stuff that the homies have been doing forever. They've kind of internalized that in me, so no way am I alone. There's a whole crew that caters to that."

After two self-released albums — *Memories Of An Elephant Man* and *This Muchlike Kills Fascists* — Busdriver dropped Temporary Forever on his own label, Temporary Whatever. Thanks to sympathetic production by LA producers like GD, Daddy Kev and Pans Zax, he successfully presented himself as something more than an eccentric MC, as capable of voicing political and environmental concerns as indulging his predilection for "imaginary places" and the 80s independent film Repo Man.

Busdriver's most recent project is *The Weather*, a whimsical affair that, thankfully, also came with a lyric booklet. Among its highlights are "Exaggerated Joy", a subtle satire of how people often view him as a "conscious rapper" who only talks about positivism, not sex and violence. Instead of attacking the stereotypes head-on, however, he cloaks his outbursts in random images: "I'm supposed to be reading palms and doing tarot card shuffles/in rainfall/I'm a licensed practitioner, correcting brain flaws with the gas-powered chainsaw/Wearing a reclaimed shawl/Are you ready to lose your virginity?" "I don't like to take a didactic approach," he says while admitting that much of his music meditates on world affairs. "I just like to word things interestingly."

Busdriver doesn't mind being viewed as an unusual or even eccentric character influenced by equal parts rock and bebop. He says his vocal schemes are inspired by the harmonies he hears on independent rock albums by Ugly Casanova and Clinic. "There's certainly an overlap," he points out, between indie rock and HipHop, citing Mush groups like CLOUDDEAD for starters.

Still, he doesn't want to be marginalised either. Like so many other black and Latino rappers who consider themselves part of underground HipHop culture, he's bothered by how often he finds himself in front of all white crowds, many of whom don't understand the multicultural, musically progressive arts movement from which he emerged.

Then again, American black audiences themselves seem to favour more commercial, less challenging variants generated by Lil' Jon And The Eastside Boyz (whose crunk anthem "Get Low" is dominating US airwaves at the time of this writing), Jay-Z and even Sium Village. "That's what happened to jazz," he says. "I'm not trying to say that white people are going to take over HipHop, and I'm not trying to victimise black roles like myself. It was bound to happen. And it's OK... I wish more black people would be at our shows, but it's not going to happen."

He believes the reasons are cultural and stem from their history as an enslaved people. "We take what is given to us," he sighs, "and we try to be embraced by the norm. It's hard for American blacks to be exposed to shit to make them want to expand outside of their guided path. It sucks. That's part of the reality of being a black man in the United States." Thankfully, Busdriver escapes the norm: he's one of those people, he concludes, who has "been exposed to certain kind of stuff and understands that the world isn't what it seems". ☐ The Weather is out now on Mush



BUSDRIVER

Heavy weatherman. By Mosi Reeves

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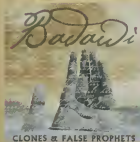
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A certain degree of anonymity suits the music of Italian art rock ensemble Larsen, as the group's guitarist Fabrizio Modonese Palumbo explains, "What we are doing is very intimate and personal," he says. "It's something that you get or you don't. In our records and our gigs, we try to build an intimate space, a certain atmosphere, something that only belongs to us and suck the listeners into it. We let the audience witness and experience a kind of private ritual."

During the past ten years, the group have toiled in obscurity, concentrating on their private ceremonies. However, public relations do not always agree with private rituals. Conjecture, hearsay and mysteries shroud Larsen's work as they have slowly, and perhaps reluctantly, seeped into the public domain. In 2002 their second album *Rever* was produced under an unusual set of circumstances by Michael Gira, of Angels Of Light and Young God Records. Several years back, Gira started receiving a series of packages from Italy, each containing a CD-R from Larsen bundled in grey felt with rough text. As Gira recalls, "Sometimes the CDs contained music—a whispered song, accompanied by a distant accordion, as if playing in the next room, or a drone of unknown origin, or a short burst of percussive chaos—sometimes just a single sound or noise, a screeching sound, as if someone were slowly etching a piece of rusted metal with a blade of some sort, or the sound of saliva working in the mouth. That's it—no other explanation, just an obscure sonic message, little pieces of an arcane vocabulary I couldn't decipher." Several months passed before a letter arrived from Larsen, who instructed Gira to come to Italy for three weeks and record the group. As extra enticement, the letter included a considerable amount of cash and a plane ticket. He accepted Larsen's offer and headed off to the group's base in Turin. Once he got there, Gira was never allowed to see the group, as Larsen performed before a screen in the studio. "Often, I sat in the control booth for a few hours, watching the shadows move behind the screens," he continues, "with no 'music' being generated at all—just the kind of highly ritualised sounds mentioned above, contained on the initial CD-Rs they'd sent me. Just as often, heated, violent arguments—shouting matches, really—would lead seemingly into a soft and beautiful groove, or

just as likely, a martial stomp, or a kind of miasma of dissonant electric atmosphere. My role as producer was simply to capture these moments on tape."

Palumbo tells the story a little differently. "We just kept him regularly updated with our work until the time to work together had become ripe at last," he says. "We would like to get far away from that old story that we recorded hidden to him. I know that is a charming episode, but I think that there are more interesting things about our music. The only thing I would like to say now is that the main thing about Larsen is Larsen. We think there's a better and more coherent way to use the visual side of our work to communicate what Larsen is about to the audience—the goal is not really to build a mystery out of ourselves, but to put the focus on the music."

Fair enough. *Rever* was completed in early 2002 and subsequently released on Young God. At the time, their membership counted five: Palumbo, Mario 'Il Bue' Schivo, on drums and xylophone, Paolo Dellapiana on accordion and keyboards, Roberto Maria Clemente on guitar and vocals, and Silvia Grosso on bass and vocals. *Rever* strolls along with a cocksure swagger, typified by the opening "Impro #2" and "Radial". With their low slung grooves haunted by the ghosts of the American West, these tracks introduce Larsen's loose thematic templates of nihilism, paranoia, claustrophobia and resigned melancholia.

Larsen's ritualist contrivances never imply any specific spirituality, but manifest themselves as the soundtracks to fictional psychodramas. *Rever* could well be an updated film score to a Sergio Leone classic, as composed by Swans or Sonic Youth in their prime. Larsen compresses buzzsaw guitars, martial rhythms, chanted vocals, deliberate basslines and the insistent drone from Dellapiana's accordion into hypnotic, interlocking riffs. These riffs compound the psychic intensity which, unlike the grandiose crescendos of Magwai or Godspeed You! Black Emperor, propels itself towards corrosion and collapse. "Probably the paranoia is the result of the circular and dense structure of our compositions, while the melodies set up a bitter atmosphere," speculates Palumbo. "We are still 'looping' with our new works, even if we are shifting a bit from the claustrophobia and we are more into melancholia. We are getting

older and that's probably inevitable. Anyway, we are careful to avoid talking about specific topics within our music. Atmospheres are what interest us. We are kind of an 'Ambient' band. Even if we are using vocals more than in the past, we have not any real lyrics, just some narrowly chosen words instead of sentences. Voice is for us just another instrument, one more indication, often just a sound to push the music in the direction we want."

Soon after a tour in support of *Rever*, Silvia Grosso, whose breathy yet staccato voice added a considerable presence to Larsen's sound, left the group to pursue her love of jazz. The remaining members have forged confidently ahead, having recently completed a historical compendium of outtakes, soundtracks and rare material called *Musm*. The album contains few excerpts from Larsen's currently out of print debut, *No Arms, No Legs, Identification Problems* (1996), where their elliptical guitar riffs nestled into field recordings of children playing, running water and angry wails of noise. Yet the highlight of the album has to be the explosive stomp of "How A Mosquito Operates", which Larsen produced as part of a soundtrack to *CARTOONMALETTIMATTI*, the cartoons of early 20th century animator/cartoonist Winsor McCay. Here, the twin guitars of Palumbo and Clemente alternate between jagged monochords, which steadily increase in velocity as the rhythm section crashes forward with the will of a juggernaut. *Musm* also features a curious reinterpretation of Pink Floyd's "Vegetable Man", where very little of the original remains within the dense cascade of xylophone tinkery.

In 2004, Larsen are planning a series of reinterpretations of Autichne. "This is not an Autichne cover album," Palumbo explains, "although that was the original idea we had, but we failed because we are a terrible cover band! What we have got are new Larsen suites. Our music springs from improvisation, but of course we have the chance to choose what to keep and what, on the other side, is not worthy to. I think the intensity of Larsen is exactly into this balance between nature and organisation, a subtle equilibrium with a magic quality that has the power to always thrill us when we get it playing." □ *Musm* is self-released and is available through Cargo (UK) and Goodfellow (Italy). Larsen Website: www.larsen.it



ERGO PHIZMIZ

One-man movement. By Ed Baxter

"It's accidental, the name I use. Because it is a peculiar name, people think there is some mystery – 'the enigma of Ergo Phizmiz'. That's never been an intention of mine. I like the fact, for instance, that people think I am a band. I enjoy playing on it now."

Redolent of damp empty rooms warmed only by a soldering iron, the music of Ergo Phizmiz is both bafflingly solipsistic and engagingly ludic. He's adept at exquisite, spontaneous songs, pointed forays into any electronics and long suites for radio in which grotesques gather to give voice to feelings of apocalyptic destruction. With an extensive website which boasts of 100 hours of recently completed (and diverse) music, including nine record releases (*The Music Of Ergo Phizmiz* is a good introduction), he's not so much a one-man band as a one-man movement. It all comes wrapped in layers of self-effacement, but there's an aggressive sheen to his disguises. The curious name provides a wobbly semblance of stability, a hastily erected screen on which to project your own musings. Intrigued, I telephone him in Lincolnshire. A thumbnail sketch provides a few clues to his past. Ergo was born in 1980. By the age of ten he was composing on a Yamaha Music Machine. He knocked out 13 operas and then retired from being a child prodigy. After a five-year sabbatical, during which time he became a moderately successful stand-up comedian, he started home recording once more. He hasn't stopped since.

His latest project is an LP of "colliding religious musics", *Gangotri*, a collaboration with People Like Us and XperXr. Intended as an ambitious live show at Lincoln Cathedral that never happened, Ergo is instead putting it out on his own Mukow label, hoping to graduate from CD-R to vinyl. What he and his collaborators share is not just vast ambition, but a sense of humour and an instinctively comradistic attitude. They all come from a generation for which

theoretical access to all music has led to a knowing but slightly incompetent attitude by which a great affection for pop culture is combined with bold conceptual thoughts often more advanced than their technical or logistical ability to execute them. There's an eagerness, an earnestness and a real charm that binds these and other disparate figures together. Ergo remarks that Vicki Bennett, aka People Like Us, suggested to him that there existed, waiting to be discovered, an ill-defined group of artists who "stood on different islands, waving at each other. They tend not to sound similar," he goes on, "which is interesting. You can't put your finger on it. It's a question of spirit, rather than a musical affinity."

Ergo recognises the seriousness of intent that his peers have in common, a seriousness not exactly belied by the whimsicality of their musics but certainly tested and rendered ambivalent. Raw – make that cooked – material, be it kitsch, disco, Laurel & Hardy or church hymn, is viewed as fair game; its usage – make that abuse – is as unproblematic as lifting the lid of a piano. A degree of self-consciousness whereby the anxiety of influence gives way to a light-hearted meander through everything that's on offer is the condition in which so much of today's music is made. It negotiates the anxiety of influence, the contemporary listener's attempt to make sense of the terrifying volume of stuff and – the artist's peculiar problem – the avoidance of getting stuck in a solitary rut. The solution lies in fluidity – follow your instincts, act quickly, develop a hit and miss approach, keep moving.

It's only when the secondary problem eventually comes into view – how to get this stuff into circulation – that the method reveals its limitations. "There's no place in the industry for what I do – nowhere for it to go," he says. "I gave up on that a long time ago. There was no response. Personally, I could subsist on making soundtracks, a lot of other people might find

that possible as well. It's a nightmare really. I can't do much else. Advertising is the main problem, to reach any kind of audience, I try not to let that interfere. But I spend more time now trying to promote than I do composing. I used to spend 16 hours a day composing; now it's intermittent." With a record deal unlikely, radio currently provides the post-expressionist space for all his interests: writing, sound effects, field recordings, movie soundtracks, opera, religious music, rock, comedy, dance, restlessness, "things that are beyond definition". He's completed two elaborate radio art suites for *Resonance* 104.4 FM, as well as nearly a dozen one-offs, a soundtrack for Channel 4 television, an installation... "All my life I've always created," says Ergo. "It's not a matter of choice – as a child I drew all the time, I wrote for years – and still now I do something all the time. I hear music all the time, have ideas all the time."

His technique has drifted: he's currently not so interested in spoken word and text, and is focusing instead on sampling. He sees this development in terms of foregrounding the external rather than continuing to explore the idiosyncrasies of his inner world. His approach is charmingly quaint: "Six months ago I didn't know anything that was around in that area, although I use a lot of musical references, even to English religious music and folk music. Which is peculiar because I strongly dislike English folk music. But then I often reference things I don't like."

"The sound of what I do is always consistent – but stylistically it's always changing. I'm currently mixing up metal rubbish bins that I can play only when it rains. People generally want to hear the same thing from an individual artist, but I physically have to move on to the next place. You see, I follow my nose. My nose points in different directions." **C** Website: www.ergophizmiz.com
Ergo Phizmiz plays at the LABC's Advent-Garde free festival this month; see Out There



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CD LR 384 LIVIO MINAFRA
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CD LR 385 CAROLYN HUME / PAUL MAY
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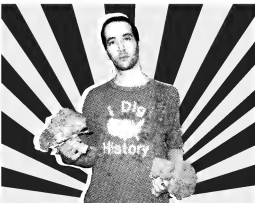
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SPOKANE Measurement CD

Spokane is not for people who want to belong to something. On Measurement we find that Spokane has changed slightly with the addition of Robert Donne (Lafayette, Breadwinner) on bass. Having always believed optimism to be a destructive force and always suspicious of idealism, Spokane reduces its songs to an unromantic narrative, avoiding the comfort of hooks. Instead, Spokane employs subtle changes in mood and lyric, instrumental shifts in tone, while retaining the grandiose and satisfying crescendo that has become so popular in thematic or cinematic music such as this.

"Highly recommended for the sort of folk who like to fuck to Smog"
—Maxica Kendrick, Chicago Abolter



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GLOBAL EAR: SACRAMENTO

A survey of sounds from around the planet
This month: at Sacramento's Northern California NoiseFest, Cameron MacDonald
hears a peculiar soundtrack to Arnold Schwarzenegger's rise to power



Heads in vinyls, baby: noisebats Contact Mic Arts Union, Uberkunst and Nipple attempt to recell Anne

In the typical Hollywood action movie, Dolby-amplified cacophony is orchestrated to entertain audiences enough to lure them back in for another fix. The actor who is most excited for his solo performances of returning gunfire and grenades is Arnold Schwarzenegger. In the roles typically played by the newly elected Governor of California, we witness the hero of Order canceling out Chaos, in the process creating equal amounts of mayhem. Many Californians perceived their state capitol Sacramento as a vortex of bureaucratic disorder, and Arnold as the saviour who had arrived to 'clean house'. And noise certainly played its part in the creation of Arnold's celebrity status — one strong enough to win him the governorship of the most economically powerful state in the Union.

How fitting, then, that the 2003 Northern California NoiseFest commenced in Sacramento during the weekend before the 7 October recall election. While Schwarzenegger and 137 other candidates claimed to be days away from ending "politics as usual", 32 musicians gathered to destroy musical convention at a venue across the street from the state capitol building.

The Sacramento based Experimental Media Research Laboratory began the annual NoiseFest in 1995 in their hometown, as a successor to 1994's summer-long Experimental Music Series. "We never heard of any other noise festival, so we decided to create a big, crazy weekend of noise," explained NoiseFest co-founder Floyd Diebel. William Burg, Fest co-organiser and ringleader of kabuki-industrial outfit Uberkunst, remarked that the event was mainly a reunion of old musician friends and members of an audience who "don't get out very often". Over the next seven years, the NoiseFest was staged in tiny coffee shops like Luna's Cafe, Capitol Garage and the True Love Coffeehouse, where an impromptu festival warfare breakfast once occurred. Performers mainly hailed from Northern California, while a few travelled from Europe and Japan. The NoiseFest is still a small underground phenomenon in a city that generally sticks to TV and Top Ten radio for its cultural needs. The city-funded Sacramento Metropolitan Arts

Commission gave a small grant to the event this year, because of its peculiarity and longevity. Both Uberkunst and Burg find the 2003 Fest's concurrence with the recall election to be pure coincidence.

During this year's Fest's Friday "harsh noise" night at Luna's Cafe, event photographer Tom Working identified that connection. "Arnold makes a lot of noise by constantly repeating himself," he suggested, before his rant about Arnold's alleged partnership with Enron CEO Ken Lay and their possible role in the state's 2001 energy crisis was drowned under disgruntled wails of tortured electricity. Matt Taggart aka PORV was standing beneath paper outcrops of tropical fish, voluntarily throwing his shoulders back in divine rapture with every blast of feedback he triggered from his amp with a distortion box in hand. Afterwards, the Montanan described his performances — driven by visions of collapsing glaciers — as "therapeutic". Similar Merzbow-inspired acts seemingly alluded to artillery explosions and the screeching of shrapnel against glass that night, before a 300-strong audience who watched attentively, as if they were munching through popcorn buckets in a multiplex cinema. Randy Yau provoked a volcanic rumble out of a guitar amp with just a microphone and his voice. "I'd like to describe it as controlling power in the palm of my hand," the vice president of San Francisco's 23rd Avenue music collective commented. "It's a masturbatory performance."

If the "harsh noise" showcase was about audio self-destruction, then much of the following night was about arguments. Acoustic bass soloist Thomas Helton clashed two chords together with a bow that snapped on the final beat. Long Beach noise collective Isatagan concocted a wall of FM blare with a sampler and two boomboxes, as they bled a distorted Star Wars theme tune over recordings of peace rallies. Local free jazz unit Klondike & York held a possible parody of the only televised election debate attended by Schwarzenegger, with two percussionists and two string players bickering up a storm, while the star saviour tried to interrupt them with their meandering proposals. Armed with unplugged violins, Bellingham, WA duo Nuggin find

bucketshot notes at each other, almost playing nose to nose at times, before member Eric Ostrowsky suddenly walloped outside to continue his soapbox speech.

The next morning, Schwarzenegger came to town in his tour bus, and led a rally with Twisted Sister on the capitol building's steps. Singer Dee Snider handed him an unplugged guitar to mime along to "We're Not Going To Take It". Arnold strummed a few bars before returning the prop with a smile. He knew of his victory and it was time to party during the closing credits of his three month long movie. During the NoiseFest's final show that night, San Francisco's Contact Mic Arts Union oddly anticipated the din of Arnold's many Hummers that would soon be swishing around downtown. They created massive, AM-style drones with laptop-manipulated field recordings, and a bowed piano were koto. Local IDM artist Chuchi Jones's set recalled all the talking head election speculations on cable news shows, with the garbled utterances he emitted from a crumpled Speak & Math toy. Sleepytime Gorilla Museum percussionist Moe Sciarano launched a rhythmic attack on broken cymbals, keyboards, 78s and brass bars, along with china bowls thrown against a brick wall in perfect time, and a bass drum that he sawed a hole into for a headset to pick up and scream inside.

Uberkunst gave the festival finale with three percussionists wearing Mad Max fetish gear pounding Neanderthal rhythms on an empty gas tank and toms. Burg took a power sander to a street sign, sending enormous sparks into the unsuspecting audience. "It's simulated violence," explained Burg beforehand. "It's a safe outlet to release our aggression." Keep in mind that Uberkunst debuted on the night of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. The group then closed the 2003 NoiseFest with Burg as a vengeful Conan the Barbarian, attacking his colleagues with a fake axe, leaving corpses onstage underneath a homemade demon idol. "They killed us!" he shrieked. The audience bowed for more. ☐ For more information on NoiseFest and its compilation CDs: www.norcalnoisefest.com

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INVISIBLE JUKEBOX: WILL OLDHAM

Every month we play a musician a series of records which they are asked to identify and comment on - with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear. Tested by Anne Hilde Hesel.

Photos by Steve Gullick



Will Oldham's career began as an eight year old actor, and by 16 he had landed a role as a preacher in John Sayles's 1987 film *Matewan*, among union struggles in an Appalachian mining community. No larger roles were forthcoming, however, and in the early 90s he began to write songs while in retreat in his hometown of Louisville, Kentucky, whose local music scene included the likes of Squirrelbait, Slint and Bastro. These were released in 1993 as *Palace Brothers' There Is No One What Will Take Care Of You* (Drag City). Ten years on, thanks to continued support from the Drag City and Domino labels, Oldham has more than 20 albums and EPs under his belt, as well as numerous limited edition singles, collaborations and soundtracks under a variety of aliases including Palace, Palace Brothers and Palace Music.

Employing a rotating cast of musicians including his brothers Ned and Paul Oldham, David Grubbs, and Slint's Brian McMahon and Britt Walford, Oldham has gradually developed a distinctive raw, quavering vocal style, nailed to a threadbare, unpolished folk rock soundworld. With one foot firmly planted in shadowy Americana – psychodelic blues, bluegrass, gospel and murder ballads – and the other in the punk bile of *Dinosaur Jr.*, Patti Smith and Hüsker Dü, his output has ranged from the ramshackle rock of *Viva Last Blues* (1995), to the desolation of *Arise, Therefore* (1996), the dark masterpiece *Joy* (1997), the wounded, introspective *I See A Darkness* (1999), the eroticism of *Ease Down The Road* (2000), and the heartbreak of this year's *Master And Everyone*.

Trading under the name Bonnie 'Prince' Billy since 1998, Oldham is an elusive, private character who tends to shy away from giving revealing interviews. He has collaborated with a wide range of artists including Kevin Drumm, Edith Frost, film maker Harmony Korine (a cameo role in 1999's *Julien Donkey-Boy*), Alan Licht, David Pajo, The Boxhead Ensemble and Jim White. In 2000, Johnny Cash recorded his song "I See A Darkness", and this summer he was the opening act on Björk's US tour.

The jukebox took place in October while he was in London for Domino's tenth anniversary concerts, and the photos were taken at the site of David Blaine's box suspended over the River Thames.

SQUIRRELBAIT

"WHEN I FALL"

FROM SQUIRRELBAIT (DECKERS OGDAR 1990)

This is from my teenage years in Kentucky: Squirrelbait. They're from Louisville. [Pointing to picture on the back of CD] That's my high school. I think my brother Ned took this photograph even though it's not credited.

The group included David Grubbs and Slint founder Brian McMahon. Weren't they early collaborators of yours?

David Grubbs plays piano on *Anise*, *Therefore* and Brian McMahon plays on the first *Palace record* – guitar, bass and drums on different songs. Then he went on to do *The For Matron*. It was great in Louisville at that time. I started going to shows in B3, I was 13 years old. My older brother Ned was in lots of bands, all punk things, didn't make any records. You know, people playing bass with a spoon, sitting down playing instruments. When I started going to shows people were still pogging, in Louisville at least. It was awesome.

Did you know then that you wanted to become a musician?

No, I couldn't play an instrument, I never thought that I was going to play music. I thought I'd be an actor, I started acting when I was eight. I went to a special school, an additional 15 hours a week of classes after regular school and on the weekends. When we were doing [John Sayles's] *Matewan*, that's when they were starting Slint in B6 and I think at that time we were talking about being in a band together just because we were friends. I said, "OK, I'll try and learn to play an instrument", but then I didn't learn.

TEENAGE JESUS AND THE JERKS "BABY TOLL"

FROM TEENAGE JESUS AND THE JERKS (OMNIBUS 1999)

[Listens for a while] It sounds familiar but I don't know what it is. Is it B3?

1979.

Is it Lydia?

Yes, *Teenage Jesus And The Jerks*.

It's awesome!

When did you go to New York?

When I was 15, January B6, I was about to turn 16, Squirrelbait played two shows in one weekend there. First one was at Maxwell's in Hoboken playing with Dinosaur – before they had to change their name to Dinosaur Jr. – which was awesome. There were some Louisvilleans there, from a slight generation before, from bands like the Babylon Dance Band, who were living in Hoboken playing in a group called Anisatam. That's when Homestead was in the beginning of its prime as a record label, and Gerard Cosloy ran Homestead. Now he runs Matador. Saturday night there was a show at the Irving Plaza, The Necros opening for Jesus 'Youth'. I was totally psyched, because I wasn't that much of a Jesus 'Youth' fan, although I liked certain songs like "Death Valley 69", but I was very excited by the prospect that Lydia Lunch might be at that show, maybe performing. I went up and introduced myself to her.

It was very scary, she was going out with Forbus and I went up to her and she went, 'My boyfriend is over there buying drugs'. We started talking and she said, "Let's sit down", and she pulled a blackback out of her pocket, which I was sure she was going to hit me with. I think she saw the look of fear on my face and said, "No no, I just want to sit down, and I can't while this is in my back pocket". We became penpals after that.

Were you inspired by the crosswalk of styles that was rampant in New York at the time – the marriage of art rock, minimalism, punk and noise?

The cool thing about Lydia is that she had content, but most of that [No Wave] stuff didn't have any content, it was about pushing envelopes. And once the envelopes were pushed, for the most part that's it, you can go

back and listen to it but it's all dated. I think I like music for a lot of the traditional reasons, to have a good time, or for an emotional response. Melody is fairly important [to me] and that wasn't really going on. The Jesus 'Youth' that I liked would be usually the 12" that came out: "Halloween" and "Flower" and "Stairway", with "Bubblegum" and "Expressway To Yr Skull" on it, and "Death Valley 69". Not the albums. I never understood people who are into Sister, or even Daydream Nation.

Did you ever take part in any art 'happenings' there? I was just in a performance piece actually, two or three weeks ago. It was great. Alan Licht is a friend, and I was a Lowellfish for [an early Licht group]. So he just wrote and asked, "Did you want to be a part of the performance piece?". All I had to do was go to a place and have a beer or two and walk very slowly about 15 feet over the course of ten minutes and then dance with a completely gorgeous woman for ten minutes. And then I just left. It was kooky from [The Who's] "Bibi O'Reilly" and Blondie thrown in – The Who and Blondie, easy to dance to.

PEARLS BEFORE SWINE "IMAGES OF APRIL"

FROM PEARLS BEFORE SWINE (ESP 1996)

[Shakes his head]

The record is from B6. The singer, from Florida, has had a solo career.

Good, or something?

It's Tom Rapp's folk rock group Pearls Before Swine.

Oh yes. I'm not into this. It's weird, though, I've never heard it sound like this, this also sounds very current, like some sort of vanity project from 1999. The production is good, but the voice is so bad I can't imagine anyone enjoying [listening to it]. When I heard about this I was excited to hear them, and when I heard the record, they seemed tedious... you know, whatever, he became a lawyer, right?

Yes, he studied copyright law to help other artists.

This album is a covert attack on the Vietnam war: would you like to hear more protest and overt political content from today's songwriters?

Yeah I think the insertion of propaganda in all art is a good idea, the more insidious and subliminal the better. Do you install subliminal messages into your songs? Certainly, yeah.

Are they political messages?

Well, there's politics and religion, and I'm of the belief that for the most part my existence is outside of the institutions of politics and religion. But then there is politics and religion that seep into almost every single decision that you make, and to what extent the institution is different from reality – you can say it's all political. It's all religious, everything that you do. So yeah, in that sense, but I don't feel I'm that involved with changing the lives of millions of anybody who lives and works on Capitol Hill, necessarily. Most people don't vote. But I have a feeling that more people will vote in the next election than the last election.

Because of a controversy over the war?

That's a big deal, and I don't think the way our economy is, but mostly the war. I think there are a lot of people who regret either having been complacent or having voted for George W. Bush. Because it's apparent that if he's not a hypocrite he's just an ignoramus, and I think a lot of people see that, I don't feel I'm making a political statement in saying that. Probably the best thing Arnold Schwarzenegger has done for democracy is that he's actually won some people up to the idea that it could be fun to go out and vote. He's become a poster child for politics, so people will be like, "Oh, this is fun, Arnold Schwarzenegger is Governor of California, I'll vote in the next election."

So that might have a better effect than, say Michael Moore and his 18?

Michael Moore is more interested in promoting himself



than any real issue. Having seen [Blinking For Columbe] the only thing he made me think was to hope more people would unlock their doors. I think that's great. I think more people should unlock their doors, you know, but then I get claustrophobic really easily. I think prior to September 11 the impression was that if we can make it through four years without a major incident then fine, then we can get a new president. And then a major incident happened and things started to go wrong straight away from [Bush's] very first speech. After that, it's been very upsetting, and the newspaper most days is very upsetting since then. Angering.

MATMOS "ZEALOUS ORDER OF CANDIED KNIGHTS" FROM THE CIVIL WAR (MATMOS) 2000

Is this the new Matmos? I have heard it once. I think David Grubbs is on this record. It's amazing artwork. You know Drew [Daniel, of Matmos] is from Louisville? How did you get involved in the Björk tour?

Through [film maker] Harmony Korine. He was friends with her and he was friends with me, and a long time ago we were going to Iceland and he said, "You should hook up with Björk," so we hooked up and it was really nice. And then all of a sudden my booking agent called, he was really proud that he thought it was some totally random thing [the invitation to open Björk's shows], and I let him believe that. And I thought, I don't really enjoy opening shows, I've opened less than ten shows. One of the main reason people open shows is to be a parasite on somebody else's audience.

Do you pick out your support now?

We'll pick groups that will be fun to travel with and that I think that I can learn from. Like Quixotic—we played a bunch of shows with them, which was super; and a group called Bright Black, a woman named Joanna Newsom and a group called Faun Fables and Soma out of Baltimore, and Long Live Death from Baltimore.

I get offers every now and then to open for a big act in the States, and there is no part of that evening that sounds attractive to me. But it was different because I knew that Björk has an amazing attention to detail, that she likes quality and it seems to be a multifaceted thing. And I knew that I wouldn't get a chance to see how something like that is put together, so I figured that nobody in the audience would want to see my show or anything like that—I didn't think I would win over that many fans. It was just me and an autograph. There was

no emotional build, the whole thing would be one piece, roughly 12 songs, autograph only. I picked up the autograph right before that show. I figured I had to make my sets valuable to me so part of it was learning a new instrument. It was a really nice trip.

Did singing at places like the Hollywood Bowl change your music?

I think I was learning from Björk's set more than my own. Just seeing how the songs were arranged. Rather than having keyboard, strings and a live drummer and bass, it was the opposite. She had Matmos providing the rhythm parts and a live string section and Zeena [Parkins, on harp and accordion]. And nobody does that. And there aren't that many acts that you see now where the principal instrument is the voice.

Who do you think are great inspiring voices today?

The singer in Faun Fables does, or Mira and Christina Bilotte from Quixotic have amazing voices. Björk, especially live. Sometimes her records are so pristine that they sound inhuman, but live her voice is great. Polly Harvey, totally fucking amazing voice, and maybe for me the most exciting voice of singers alive right now, just because of the range and all the things she's willing to do with her voice, from Diamanda Galas, to Björk and Barbara Streisand to Nick Cave, all dynamics thrown into one voice. And lots of classic blues players, like Muddy Waters, Son House, Bukka White or Blind Willie Johnson; Country singers and classic voices like Frank Sinatra; and foreign voices on records that I have whose names I'll probably never know.

Did you ever take singing lessons?

When I was taking all the theatre classes, there were voice classes, some was singing and some was about using your voice in different ways.

Did you ever think of using more programmed beats and sounds in your music?

Totally. I was on this Groovebox compilation maybe three or four years ago [At Home With The Groovebox, 2000]. Grand Royal gave everybody Grooveboxes, these elaborate sequencers, and you were supposed to use that to make a track and your play was that you got to keep this \$800 machine. So I programmed a song on that thing. I've done two songs now with this guy Chris Vienna who's Tweaker, he used to play drums in Nine Inch Nails. Now he has a solo project involving programming. I did a tour with Run On, where I made a backing tape using a drum machine and all beats and just played guitar and sang with strings and organ parts, and it's a thrill, totally a thrill. I know where the beats are, I know when the strings are going

to come in, it's never going to be any different, so that means that I know where I can put my voice at this time, so it gives me so much freedom.

Do you listen to a lot of electronic music?

Not a lot, mostly because I do like to hear something happening. I like some of the old Aphex Twin music where the songs don't really repeat, there are different things happening from beginning to end.

SUN CITY GIRLS "THE FLOWER"

FROM TORCH OF THE MYSTICS (TUPELD) 1990

[Listens intently for a while]

In Europe they're thought of as pretty obscure...

Aha... it's not Sun City Girls?

Yes.

I really liked that solo record one of them did on Revenant [Sir Richard Bishop's Salvador Kalle]. I think the only Sun City Girls record that I own is volume six of that series that they did about two or three years ago [Carnal Folklore Resurrections, or Abduction]. It was field recordings of themselves and of marketplaces in South East Asia.

They are interested in rituals and shamanism—does that have any place in your music?

I guess to the extent that there might be some sort of religion or religiosity or ritual in Sun City Girls' music then I would probably say that there is a good deal of that that goes into the records that I participate in. Their music seems not excessively transcendent, it seems very grounded to me, like a street level version of ritual, not cathedral, not grand temple, more like someone had a little altar on a sidewalk.

The group generally preserve a sense of mystery, never showing their faces in photographs.

Yeah, I think that's great, it makes complete sense. I mean, I don't know if they all have jobs, I guess they do—I can't imagine they could live off the music, but maybe they do, because their records are sometimes extremely high priced. A 7" will come out and it might be \$20. It's a huge effort to keep yourself outside of the process of putting records out. And if it was worth the effort I would stay completely outside of the whole process, having any sort of public face or personality. At a certain point it becomes more an effort to stay outside than to just do it.

Do you prefer working in the studio or on stage?

In the beginning it was easily the studio before performing, but it's gotten to the point where touring with a group of musicians is equally as valuable and



equally as rewarding as making records. It's a different type of a reward. If you're putting all your effort and energy into a live show then what you're doing is perpetuating having to go out playing another live show. You have to do more and more, which is great but fighting on some levels, because for one it's absolutely completely destructive in terms of a personal life. Any sort of home life, or maintaining any sort of relationship with friends or family or a significant other, is completely impossible. And then if you got your legs cut off in a terrible car accident, then you can't rely on going out to play the next show. It's a day to day existence, but now it's really cool.

EO SINH & NAMH HAO "VC LOVE SONG"

FROM HIGH ROADLY MUSIC FROM VIETNAM (TRIKONT) 2000

If you played this first, I would have thought this was a Sun City Girls record. It sounds great.

It's a compilation of buskers and amateur musicians recorded on the streets of Vietnam.

Of the records played today, this is probably the most likely that I would own in my present record collection. Does this appeal to you, the idea of making music unfettered by the business of formally recording, marketing and promoting it?

Sort of, but for me to enjoy a record—or movie for that matter—you have to have the sensation that it is a record of what is happening. A lot of records aren't that way, people prepare the music and then they take it into the studio and they record it, and it seems like something should be going on in the studio, something should be happening in the recording process for it to feel like it is a special event.

Either the song can be to some extent written at the time of the recording, or the guitar part, the one you hear on the record, is the first time you ever hear it played, combined with predetermined elements, so that it's not just all improvisation. Like the first Boston record or the new R Kelly record, those are two examples of where it seems to be all about the recording experience, an excitement going on how something is mixed or how something is produced and arranged, that's happening in the studio, or the energy of the producer is what's happening in the studio.

It's funny to see the duping of the indie band that goes on. People think they're going to go and record with Steve Albini and that's going to make a magical record, and all Steve does is turn on the tape recorder and show them what their music sounds like. And 90

per cent of the time it's unexciting because they play like they're having a band practice and then it's over. Then they think, 'This is a magic record because Steve Albini made it'. The recording studio is a very special place, it's not just being there that makes it happen. A decision has to be made, multiple decisions. It seems like most of the other music that we've heard today was probably prepared prior to the recording or some knowledge as to what was going to happen before 'record'. When you go into the recording studio it seems like there should be no conception of what you're going to leave with.

BOB DYLAN & JOHNNY CASH "CARELESS LOVE"

FROM NASHVILLE 1969 (BOOTLEG)

[Immediately] Yeah, I know what this is, but I don't know what record it's on.

It's a bootleg of Dylan playing with Johnny Cash.

[Looks at CD cover] I don't think I've ever heard him sing this song. I think I've heard a lot of what's on this bootleg at one point.

Johnny Cash recorded a version of your song "I See A Darkness" in 2000, on his American III album, and you ended up singing on it. How did that come about?
I think someone at [Cash's producer] Rick Rubin's office contacted Drag City at one point and they were like, 'We want all the lyrics to the Viva Las Blues record', so I had to type them all out, and I faxed them back and then heard nothing. This was a year or a year and a half before I did the recording with Johnny Cash.

And then Matt [Sweeney, Oldham's regular guitarist] said that he ran into somebody who said they'd been to Rick Rubin's house and that he had my records all over the floor and was listening to them a lot. So I was like, that's cool. And then Matt went to see a show in New York and he saw Rick there, so he went up to him and introduced himself and said that he was playing with me. He was like, 'Well, Johnny Cash just recorded "I See A Darkness"'. So Matt calls me and tells me. I was like, 'Fuck', you know? We were playing a show in New York a few days later and Matt invites Rick Rubin, and he came and sat on the side of the stage during the whole show. And afterwards he came up and told me about Johnny Cash, and he was like, 'You should totally come and play the piano', and I was like, 'Sounds great, sounds really exciting, I'll be there, just tell me when'. And he gave me his phone number and I gave him mine and then he was like, 'We'll work it out'. But then I called him and left a message: 'Hi, This is Will

Oldham, um, I have to tell you something: I can't play the piano'. Of course I knew that when we'd talked, but I was just thinking 'I'll put my foot in the door right here and not take it out'. Whatever you want to do is fine, but if there is any possible way that I could meet Johnny Cash and June Carter Cash in any way that would be something really important to me. So that's it, 'bye.'

Rick Rubin called me back and said, 'Well, we're going to have a session out here in Los Angeles and Johnny will be there and June should be there if you want to come out and meet them'. I bought my plane ticket, got there on a Sunday morning and kept calling and no one was answering. I was like, 'Fuck, I'm fucked' because I'd just flown to California. Finally we talked and he said, 'Yeah, we're about to get started'.

It was about one in the afternoon, so I went over. I was sitting in the office at Rick Rubin's house, and I could hear the playback of Johnny Cash's voice downstairs. And then Rick Rubin comes in from upstairs—he was just waking up—and we go downstairs and he was like, 'Johnny, this is Will Oldham—he wrote that song "I See A Darkness"'. And we shake hands and Johnny Cash was like, 'All right then, let's work on that song right now'. Apparently he wasn't happy with his vocals on what they'd done so far. It was at that point just guitar and vocals, I think, and so he wanted to re-sing it. He was having a hard time on the phrasing because the vocal comes in on a strange beat, or strange in terms of what he's used to. So I got this idea where I would do a guide vocal, and did that. They pulled up his old vocal and my vocal, and they're like, 'Oh, the voices sound great together'. So we decided that I'm going to do the chorus harmonies. He's still having problems with the timing, so they get this idea where I'll sit there in the vocal booth and conduct his singing.

After a couple of hours June came in, and it was so exciting sitting on a couch talking to her and hearing their conversations—the whole day was completely fantastic. There was nothing disappointing, it was all about music the whole day. The music that we'd played, we finished that and then they did another song, which was really exciting, hearing multiple takes, and then he was exhausted and went home, and we finished the last overdubs on "I See A Darkness". So the whole day was amazing. Between takes it was just talking about music, talking about different songs, old songs, recent songs, different performers, but always about the musical aspect. It was never about anything else, nothing political, nothing social. Tremendous stuff. □

"There's a mountain made out of garbage in Brighton, Michigan," says John Olson, trying to convey exactly how messed up the home town of his fellow musician Aaron Dilloway is. "It got shut down because some little kid was sinking down there and he got his leg out open from a tuna can." It might be a throwaway joke, but it speaks of the secret themes in the pounding free rock of his group Wolf Eyes. The experience of listening to it could be likened to tetanus, the rusted and jagged sounds poking out of debas, leftovers of Western civilisation turned into a hazardous playground — a filthy wound in a punctured eardrum. Olson's tone generators grind against Dilloway's tape and guitar scree as Nathan Young's sludgy beats and howling vocals descend into the wilderness of the repressed unconscious.

Even outside the extreme noise ghetto, Wolf Eyes have made significant waves with the 50 plus releases they've made in the past three years. Loosely grouped with peers like Black Dice, with whom they once collaborated on an LP on Fusebox, and the Michigan noise acts from which its members sprang, Wolf Eyes hark back to a primitivist experimental noise tradition that can be traced right back to the Michigan roots of groups such as The Stooges and Destroy All Monsters.

"It's just being empowered enough to create your own universe out of complete homemade stuff," says Olson. "The three of us came from separate fields where that was totally important."

An archetypal American college town, Ann Arbor has a tradition of noise making with labels like Bulb and Westside Audio Labs, not to mention the new school of electronics dismantlers like Viki Hott and Mammal. Wolf Eyes might be the mote in the eye of the whole mess, or at least the scene's "perfect storm". The cluster of relationships amongst these various groups makes for an inextricably tangled genealogy. As a teenager, Dilloway was in a notorious outfit called Galen, before ending up drumming in Couch with Bulb Records honcho Pete Larson and Jim Magas (aka Marion, who went on to front Lake Of Oracula and now records solo for Ensisz Audio). As Dilloway tells it, he and Nate Young met at the early Couch shows. "I was 17," he recalls. "Couch was like the first fucked up band I ever saw play live... It was the first Couch show, I was just totally freaked out." Young was in Nautical Almanac at the time. He also recorded with Mini Systems and as Jean Street, his solo project.

Indeed, Young started Wolf Eyes as a solo electronics project in 1996, comprising modified

synths and vocals. Dilloway joined shortly afterwards, contributing face loop manipulation and guitar. Meanwhile Olson, living in nearby Lansing, had been producing music on his American Tapes label and playing in a group called Universal Indians since the early 90s. "I met Dilloway at a Galen gig," Olson recalls. "We used to have parties in our basement all the time, and one time he called up and he brought a guitar with him, so we ended up playing with him right on the spot." In the late 90s Dilloway ended up joining Universal Indians, only for that unit to wind down shortly afterwards due to various internal wrangles. Olson made a record with Wolf Eyes as Wolf Eyes With Skykes (Hanson) in 2000. The inevitable integration of the two groups, which by then featured both Young and Dilloway, solidified later that year. While the others have cut down on their extracurricular activities, Olson still makes time for Dead Machines, a project with his fiancée and Polyamory Records founder Tovah D'Rouke.

Another unlikely collaborator from the early days was a certain Andrew Wilkes-Krier (aka rock star Andrew WK), who even wrote a party anthem about the group (and covers a Couch song on his Party Till You Puke EP on Bulb). He was a member of Wolf Eyes at one



THE

point," confirms Dilloway. "He was living in New York, and twerling Wolf Eyes stuff at the same time Nate and I were." The pop icon was also in *Les And Werewolves* and a project called *The Beast People* with Dilloway, which involved only animal grunting sounds and the performers crawling on all fours.

Wolf Eyes' first vinyl release in 1999 was a split 12" with *Nautical Almanac* on Dilloway's Hanson label, which used to customise covers from old record sleeves. The splotchy attention to detail of the group's graphic design echoes their densely packed sounds.

The levels of haunted house creepiness in Young's illustrations, as the combined skull and rat cyst on the cover of *Dead Hills* (*Troubleman Unlimited* 2002) illustrates, matches both the crescendos of noise within and the lyrics, when you can decipher them. Young admits to a yen for dark imagery: "It comes off as being kind of sharp on the edges, a little dark... Personally I would rather make something about skulls and bats and bones than something about lollipops and neon colours nowadays."

"When I started playing music I thought all that was barging on dead carcasses," he continues, addressing the Industrial tag that the group has been burdened with. "I was into the sheet metal aspects of it, but all

that death and sex imagery kind of turned me off. I was more into rock 'n' roll and psychedelics."

Young's approach to lyrics has turned towards more guttural spurts, freeing itself from language logic much as *Beast People*'s grunts aimed to. "It'll just come out as loud as it possibly can — of course it's not very articulate if it comes out that loud. It's hard to articulate and perform the lyrics the way they want to be performed. It usually comes back when we record, but recently it hasn't... the lyrics I can't cling to any more, they just crumble away."

The beat on the title track of *Dead Hills* follows the Wolf Eyes pattern: ground down so slow that the physical reaction is delayed until limbs collide on the one, surging waves of horn scree wailing in behind, riding the sewer surf into Armageddon's mouth. Like a massive variation of slowed down cough syrup drunk jams, Olson explains that their distinctive sound grew out of hacked technology. "For the longest time the 'brains' of Wolf Eyes was a synth that Nate made," he says, "kind of desampling the MIDI, the digital brain, programming a bunch of beats that sound like bottles being thrown down a mansion cellar."

Crowd reactions tend to be mixed, but at every Wolf Eyes show, there's a bunch at the front pumping their

fists in the air, glorying in the unholy union of man and machine. Evidence of this reaction can be found on their *Covered In Bugs* DVD (Hanson 2003), which contains a film of a Chicago Metro show and snippets from basement gigs across the US. The volume's violence and its physiological reactions recall military experiments using sound to trigger bodily functions, and some have even likened the show to being at a youth rally. An unconcerned Young sees this as part of a Heavy Metal tradition. "I don't think it's that strange anymore," he says. "I kind of see it as a natural reaction. If I'm at a show that I'm into, I'll definitely pump my fist in the air and yell something... I think they're all conscious of what space they're going into. I don't think it's some sort of trance or anything."

In an arrangement some veteran fans find surprising, the next Wolf Eyes album will be released on Sub Pop. Olson insists that the group's Luddite modus operandi remains intact. "The album we've already started working on for them is by far the most unlistenable thing yet," he concludes. "The fact that it's on the label doesn't mean anything. We tried to record in the studio and it was just kind of a noose around our necks. So we're taking it right back to the basement. We need to be in our own cocoon cove to get it right." □



Come on kids, it's rockin' time: Aaron Dilloway (left), Nathan Young (second left and far right) and John Olson



SPEAKING IN TONGUES

Feted as one of the most imaginative post-industrial musicians of the 1980s, percussionist Z'ev almost dipped off the radar after the LA earthquake in the mid-90s. His newest associations with the Tzadik and Touch labels, and a relocation to London, have revitalised his fascination with hacking into the hidden codes of music and language.
Words: Ken Hollings. Photos: Thomas Butler



"I must create my own system or be enslaved by another man's" – William Blake

"They don't seem to realise that I'm a US citizen in transit." Silhouetted against the golden twilight, Z'ev clanks an appressing eye over the rush hour traffic in South London. Today has not been a good day. British Customs are causing problems over one of Z'ev's favourite drum machines: an old Yamaha that the percussionist has had sent on to him from the States. Since he's already been living here for two months, their official reasoning goes, he must be importing the equipment for resale in the UK. Z'ev has consequently had to waste some of his last remaining moments in this country trying to persuade them otherwise. Plans to apply for a British Library reader's ticket have had to be temporarily abandoned. "I bought that machine over ten years ago," he explains. "And it was second hand even then."

In a few days' time Z'ev will be on his way to Paris to work with theatre director Bela Gruslika on a production of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, for which he will be providing music and sound design. Meanwhile, his time away from America is already beginning to bear its first fruits. A continuing collaboration with David Jackman of Organum fame has produced a 16 minute EP, *Tinnitus Vii*, featuring Z'ev's digital treatments of four acoustic piano 'chords' recorded by Jackman as the basis for a series of Organum albums. Z'ev is also contributing a track to *Spare*, a double CD compilation of new works for organ including creations by Chris Watson, Philo Jock, Yoshiya Tsunoda and Soarkehore with Fennetz. Both recordings will be made available through the Touch label, with whom Z'ev has maintained a long working relationship over the years. Factor in live appearances over the summer at the MIMI festival in Marseilles and Occulture in Brighton, plus a new Italian translation of *Rhythmayk*. Z'ev's written treatise on the practical uses of number, rhythm and sound, available from the Small Voices label with an accompanying CD, and it becomes clear why Z'ev doesn't have a lot of time to dwell upon the nocturnes of bureaucratic procedure. "I'm also hooked up with a Scottish drummer and vocalist, Ken Hyder, who's an intrepid Tuva shaman from Siberia," he amollifies. "He's got a basement studio in Belham, and we've been working together pretty much every week. Where it's exactly going to go is not clear yet, but it's going to go somewhere. I'm actually starting to work more with different people now. That's more the mode than back in the 1980s when it was 'Z'ev, the Lone Ranger' pretty much. I was a solo person. I did work with a lot of people but not as much or in the same way. I'm more interested in exchange now. I think I'm a more social person than I was back then. Maybe you'd want to call it maturation or something, although there'll still be solo live performing going on. But even right before I'd kind of 'disappeared' I was more interested in larger, more collaborative projects. It's just been a question of getting back to that."

1+1=3

"Bela's an Eastern European who grew up in America but who's been living in Paris for over 20 years now," says Z'ev of his involvement in Gruslika's forthcoming production of *Macbeth*. "It's her thing, and I'm just being brought in to do the sound. She's been rehearsing for a month, so the text and everything is set. Now, the staging with the integration of music and the lights happens over the next month. Somebody put

us together. She came over; we met. My music was a perfect fit. We're going to do some more work together, maybe even as soon as December." The production was premiered at the end of October and ran throughout last month.


For a performer who sees music as a divinely patterned technology connecting belief with action, it's hardly surprising that the dense cruxity of myth and ritual found in Elizabethan theatre should hold such a deep fascination. As early as 1989, Z'ev was already working on his own adaptations of King Lear, which were published as *Wheels On Fire #1* and *#2* in 1990 by Temple Press, who also put out an early edition of his *Rhythmayk*. At the same time Z'ev was compiling *One Foot In The Grave*, an audiovisual retrospective of his work from 1968-90 for release on Touch. "After the Touch thing," he continues, "I was interested in the idea of developing a small theatre ensemble to make the texts and provide the music for. That kind of disappeared, but I'm starting to look along those lines again. Whether it will turn into an ensemble I don't know, but I'll definitely be working with Bela and some others. Most theatrical forms in the world have a very strong intrinsic musical aspect – Indian theatre, Indonesian theatre, Japanese theatre, Chinese theatre, Korean theatre – but in Western theatre, music is a kind of adjunct that gets brought in, but it's not such an intrinsic element that without it the form doesn't exist. Of course it used to be in mummies' plays and stuff, the antecedents of Western Theatre, but then it was still a folk art."

Speaking of his disappearance in the mid-90s, Z'ev acknowledges that he "lost ten years", but it's said with the calm assurance of one who's aware that a circle has been completed. The return to a point of departure has taken place. Physically, little has changed. The lean ascetic physique is still there, that urgent sense of energy under control, his fast rapping softly on the tabletop to emphasise a point. You notice the compact, bird-like curvature of his skull, the wiry wisps of a very physical performer encased by beaded bracelets. "It's interesting that around the time when the Touch retrospective was getting ready to come out, I kind of had a self-assessment about what I should do, where I should go from here, because I didn't want to keep doing that kind of work and was becoming interested in working with Elizabethan theatre and specifically Shakespeare's texts. I started getting into the writing, because I always had a strong literary aspect to my work. In fact in the 1970s I stopped playing music. In the 1960s and 1970s I was pretty much known as a concrete poet, which was a kind of Fluxus thing. Visual poetry and sound poetry were lumped together as concrete poetry."

Can't nobody speak that language

As you might expect of a man so widely travelled, Z'ev's been away for a while. Which is another way of saying he's highly skilled at translation. But then what would you expect from someone who grew up in Los Angeles with two names, both of which were given to him at birth? Between Stefan Joel Weissner and Sh'aul Z'ev bn Yakov bn Moshe bn Sh'ul' lies an intricate period of transition: one that connects Stefan Weissner, the creator of densely processed texts in the 1960s and 1970s, with Z'ev the percussionist, renowned for working in Shengren and flamboyant, with instruments constructed from found materials such as metal and zero plastic. Both represent different methods of translating, to the extent that Z'ev can





In 1914, Italian futurist Luigi Russolo inaugurated a noise manifesto that resonates nearly a century later in a climate that has accepted noise as a valid musical element.

But although the manifesto of the Art Of Noises is widely referenced, how much do we really know about its creator, and what became of him after his *Intonarumori* (noise intoners) failed to be taken seriously by an uncomprehending public? Gary Lachman surveys the rise and fall of a Futurist too far ahead of his time.

Illustration by Julian House at Intro

READY TO RUMBLE



On 15 June 1914, visitors to London's Coliseum were treated to a new and unusual performance. Along with the familiar face of a music hall variety show, the audience that evening were introduced to a new concept in musical entertainment. They were invited to participate in a new and daring adventure: to escape from the limited timbres and harmonies created by that dinosaur of the past, the concert orchestra, and instead to immerse themselves in "the infinite variety of noise-sounds". Their guides were two flamboyant personalities. FT Marinetti, the bosteros leader of the Italian Futurists, had already made a name for himself in the capitals of Europe, notorious for his calls to "ruin the museums", "kill the Iliads", and "kill the museums" – all extravagant methods of clearing the way for the new art of the modern world. On the poster for that evening, his name stands out in bold, black print. His companion, however, was less known, though equally forthright, and it was his invention that formed the centerpiece of the performance. With his orchestra of "23 Noise Tuners" – including "buzzers", "explosives", "crackles" and many others – Signor Luigi Russolo, "inventor of the Art of Noises", would regale his audience with a rendition of *Two Noise Spells entitled Awakening Of A Great City And A Meeting Of Motor Cars And Airplanes*.

Depending on your source, accounts of that evening differ. Russolo claimed that during his London visit he was "besieged by interviewers" and that the "whole London press was concerned daily with the Art of Noises", and that applause for his inventions from the packed house "was so prolonged and hearty that I had to return several times after the curtain fell". The anonymous reviewer for *The Times* took a different slant. For him, Russolo's Noise Spell "resembled the sounds heard in the rigging of a Channel-steamer during a bad crossing", and he remarked that it may have been unwise for the "noisemakers" to continue with their second piece "after pathetic cries of 'No more'" came from all quarters of the auditorium. One member of the audience, interviewed some 70 years later, recalled that the performance was not "all that loud, but there were these funny burps and things coming in here and there, like battleships popping off".

Russolo counted the Coliseum shows (there were 12 in all) among his victories, believing that through them "an extraordinary number of people must have heard the strange, bizarre, and incomprehensible and the chaotic of the noises, and instruments". In one respect he may have been right. "Incomprehensible" was an epithet often applied to his "infinite variety of noise-sounds". Although composers like Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Ravel showed interest in his work, and his inventions attracted financiers, for the most part his new world of noise met with fierce resistance. Marinetti wasn't far off when he compared the public's response to Russolo's art to a herd of cows being introduced to a steam engine.

It was Russolo's fate to be a pioneer far ahead of his time. But it is clear that his extraordinary ideas exerted a powerful influence on a number of avant garde and experimental composers, such as John Cage, Edgard Varèse, Harry Partch and Karlheinz Stockhausen, and the presence of various forms of noise in current electronics, HipHop, avant rock and pop testifies to his entrenchment in modern culture. Yet by the 1930s Russolo himself had given up on noise and the future, thereafter devoting himself to meditation and occultism and, in the last years of his life, returning to his first love, painting.

Although he later boasted of his inspired musical amateurism, Luigi Russolo was born into a musical family in 1885 in Portogruaro, a small Italian town north of Venice. His father, a clockmaker, was the

organist at the local cathedral as well as the director of the School Cantorum in Latisana. His two elder brothers would later graduate from the Milan Conservatory and in his early years Russolo himself studied violin. But Russolo abandoned music early on and turned to painting. When his family moved to Milan, he stayed behind to finish his schooling, then joined them in 1901. There, at 16, he began to study painting seriously, although, as with music, he never received "proper" training. His interest was stimulated by his friendship with the painter Carlo Carrà, who he visited at the Brera Academy. Around this time, Russolo worked on the restorations of Leonardo da Vinci at the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie; he also worked as an engraver and costume designer. The earliest showing of his work was at the Famiglia Artistica in Milan, in 1909, where his etchings were put on display, including a portrait of the philosopher Nietzsche that presents him in a dreamy, Symbolist mood, his sagelike profile wrapped in the swirling tresses of his mystic muse.

Although he would soon throw himself into the Futurist revolution, Russolo never abandoned the more literary, mystical aspects of Symbolism. This came through in both his technique and subject matter. A later painting, *Perfume*, displays his fascination with synesthesia, where the heavy, smoke-like brushstrokes are meant to convey the idea of a hazy, languorous scent. The notions of movement and the interpretation of the senses, both basic Symbolist concerns, emerged powerfully in his vast canvas *Music* (1911-12), in which a bold spiral of sound rises from a dreamlike piano, and coils around an array of multicolored mask-like heads. It is one of Russolo's last paintings before his career, and clearly indicates his intended direction.

In February 1909 Russolo, like many other young Italian artists, heard about Marinetti's audacious "Founding And Manifesto Of Futurism", published in *Le Figaro*. Pons was the art capital of the world at the time, and that Marinetti managed to get front page coverage was a stroke of advertising genius. But even more astounding was his "mission statement". Sick of Romanticism, classicism and just about everything else, Marinetti called for the artists of the future to "Set fire to the library shelves" and to "Turn aside the clouds to flood the museums". He anticipated the joy of seeing "the glorious old canvases bobbing adrift on those waters, discoloured and shredded". "Wreak the havoc of the hammer, the pickaxe, the chisel, the call. Soon, along with the painters Umberto Boccioni, Giacomo Balla, Gino Severini and Carlo Carrà, approached Marinetti and asked to join the movement. Until then, Marinetti had concentrated on poetry and literature, and was happy with his new recruits. Russolo and the others soon produced a manifesto of their own, competing in bombast with Marinetti's own rhetoric.

Even before Russolo explored his new world of sound, Futurism was about making as much noise as possible, illustrated by a performance Alfred Jarry's absurdist play *Ubu Roi* in Paris in 1898. Marinetti saw that the theatre of the new century would be about antagonising the audience, and getting as much publicity as possible in the process. One very effective means was the series of Futurist Evenings held in places like Milan, Trieste and Florence, performances based on music hall revues. Marinetti and other Futurist poets would declaim their works, Futurist art would be on display; there would be music, political discussion and other means of abusing the pharisees. The audience came armed with rotten fruit and vegetables, which they hurled through the show. Futurist Evenings became a popular form of entertainment and drew large crowds. If it went well, a not word break out and spread to the streets, and

next morning's papers would be filled with reports of the scandal. An exceptionally good evening would result in a court appearance, which Marinetti would turn to Futurism's favour.

It was at one such evening in Rome that Russolo got the inspiration for his Art of Noises. Francesco Balilla Pratella, a Romagnese with a love of folk music, was the official Futurist composer. To 21st century ears, Pratella's Futurist music seems rather dated, and at the time his work was far more traditional than that of innovators like Schoenberg and Stravinsky. His opera *Le Sine di Argento*, however, based on traditional Romagnese themes, attracted Marinetti's attention, and he was drawn into the Futurist fold. The art form as old fashioned and stereotypically Italian as opera should attract Marinetti seems odd. But Pratella was a believer in operatic reform and, perhaps more to the point, his success attracted attention. Marinetti knew that with such a composer in its ranks, Futurism would gain even more notoriety.

His instinct was correct. In 1910 Pratella contributed his own manifesto on Futurist music, which was soon followed by two others. Like all the Futurist manifestos, they show evidence of Marinetti's hand; typically, he dined with newspaper publication in mind and any subtleties were tweaked for better copy. Pratella attacked the timidity of Italian composers, criticising their adherence to outmoded forms; his later manifestos called for bold experimentation in musical education, and for a new system of notation.

Like practically all the Futurist manifestos, Pratella's spoke of works that, at best, were still in progress. What was needed was a demonstration of what he had in mind. In February 1913, Pratella's *inno Alla Vita, Musica Futuristica Per Orchestra* was debuted at the Teatro Costanzi in Rome, with a second performance the following month. It was a regular Futurist Evening: Marinetti, Russolo and the others made the usual contribution of bombastic declamations. But it was Pratella's music that got the crowd going. It aroused, he said, an "infernal clamour". "The public," he wrote, "seemed driven insane", and from time to time "exploded in rage resembling a mass of burning lava...". They threw an "uninterrupted shower of garbage", shouted themselves hoarse, and the whole affair eventually descended into blows.

Russolo, who was the least technically gifted though perhaps the most vocal of the Futurist artists, the Futurist pants, may have been testing the limitations of his art. Or perhaps some memory of his musical childhood was dredged up by Pratella's performance. Whatever it was, that particular Futurist Evening affected him profoundly. He gave up painting and henceforth devoted himself to summoning noise. He began by writing a manifesto. Written in the form of a letter to Pratella in 1913, "The Art Of Noises: Futurist Manifesto" argued that before the 19th century and the rise of the machine, the world was more or less quiet. "Ancient life was a silence".

Modern music, he argued, had flattened the acoustic landscape, but music had barely begun to reflect it, Russolo argued. He seems to have decided to make up for lost time. Music as it is traditionally known, he tells us, has reached the limit of the timbres and harmonies it can create. Even the new craze for dissonance will reach a dead end. In order to continue, he insisted, the music of the future needs to employ "the noises of trains, of automobile engines, of carnages, of bawling crowds...".

Along with Pratella's "music of the future" (which was by then already fairly quiet – Wagner had written an influential treatise on the theme, *On the Work Of Art Of The Future*, in 1849), Russolo looked to Marinetti for inspiration. In his concept of parole in libertà (free words), Marinetti argued that he had liberated words





GENETIC MUTATION

'Blue' Gene Tyranny is one of New York Experimentalism's unsung heroes, having collaborated with Laurie Anderson, John Cage, Robert Ashley, David Byrne and even a fledgling Iggy Pop. But, as Julian Cowley discovered, his avant-garde compositions and piano music mark him out as an audio researcher par excellence



Lowrie Anderson once compared 'Blue' Gene Tyranny's piano playing – which she displayed on her 1969 album *Strange Angels* – to “a huge ocean liner pulling out”, and the verdict of Kyle Gann, music critic for *The Village Voice*, is that “God plays piano through this man”. In his mid-80s opera *Perfect Lives*, composer Robert Ashley stylized Tyranny as Buddy, *The World's Greatest Piano Player*. Robert Sheff, the man behind the “Blue” Gene persona, has a relationship with the keyboard that fuses audacious complexity and ravishing loveliness. Gann gets close when he suggests that the Tyranny approach evokes Charles Ives improvising with additional touches of Keith Jarrett at his finest. “I’ve found that sometimes when you start doing very purified structural things you get really emotional music,” Sheff observes. “It’s ominous and it happens all the time. On the other hand, when you start doing emotional things it can bring in all your habits and not make a very interesting structure.” A point well illustrated by “A Letter From Home” on his superb recent solo piano recording, *Take Your Time (Lovely Music)*, which “comes out very emotional, but is a very strict composition”.

“Blue” Gene Tyranny came into being at the start of the 1970s. Sheff was touring with The Stooges, at the invitation of Iggy Pop. They had met several years earlier in Ann Arbor, Michigan. “Iggy had just got out of high school, a sweet kid who had dyed his hair silver and an excellent drummer,” Sheff recalls. “I was in a ‘white boy blues band’; we loved Chicago and Delta blues, and Iggy played drums.” The Stooges tour occurred at the height of rock’s love affair with glitter and glam, and group members wore flamboyant costumes which Sheff couldn’t afford. “I decided to do this piece called ‘Blue’ Gene Tyranny’s Genetic Transformation” that would consist of frequent changes of my clothes. Basically I wore what would later become punk fashion. At one point I put light-emitting diodes under my hair. I was sweating while playing and kept getting shocks from the batteries. People kept running up, thinking my hair was on fire.” Sheff smuggled this performance piece into The Stooges’ act and felt at home with the name. He liked the colour ‘blue’ for its warmth and blue collar association. “And at that time, in Berkeley, California, where I was living, there was controversy provoked by racist lectures on the supposed genetic inferiority of black people’s brains. I was thinking of genetic tyranny. Lots of people were making up names then, including Iggy and my friend the composer Phil Harmonic – mine stuck.”

Sheff was born in 1945 in San Antonio, Texas. In his Texan upbringing, he recognises the roots of his subsequent musical openness and intense interest in sound. “I’d listen to the radio, including science fiction and *The Goon Show*,” he recalls. “The sound stimulated my imagination greatly. Then, about one or two in the morning on certain days, there’d be gospel music. A lot of musicians in the southern States play a lot of different music, especially in New Orleans. I started studying piano at around ten years old, grew up playing in rock ‘n’ roll bands at school, played classical music and then I became interested in electronic music, which was just starting. I heard a lot of jazz. I experienced many different kinds of music

within a short period of time.”

These days he relishes being a member of William Duckworth’s Cathedral Band, a project that brings together highly diverse musicians to improvise and broadcasts the outcome live on the Internet (www.monobestree.com/cathedral). Participants this year have included William Barton on didgeridoo, trombonist Stuart Dempster, Wu Man on the lute-like Chinese pipa, guitarist Abel Domingues, DJ Tamara from Seattle concocting her unique mixture of rhythms and avant garde samples, with Tyranny on piano and Duckworth himself playing the Pitchbend, a multi-user instrument designed specifically for the Web.

When Sheff was 11, his first composition teacher sent him home with records of music by Charles Ives and Harry Partch and an assignment to write a suite of six contrasting short pieces. “I didn’t know what a suite was but I wrote six pieces,” he says. “One turned out to be 12-tone even though I didn’t know what 12-tone was. One, which I later orchestrated and still find interesting, was a massive cluster played by an instrumental group, with lots of movement within it.” In time Sheff came to recognise this precocious piece as a realisation of “the resonant universe idea” that afflicted many musicians of his generation. He finds this kind of consciousness among peers profoundly intriguing: “Each generation, say every ten years, has something that’s unique to it, something very deep, a cultural subconscious that may be genetic. I’m looking for that really deep existence. I think it’s a very strong thing that art can teach and show people. Art can give feedback to say yes, we’re all in this together.”

Around 1959 Sheff and Philip Krumm, a slightly older schoolfriend, discovered they shared enthusiasm for Charles Ives and John Cage and, uniquely in America’s south west at that time, they started to organise events featuring radically unorthodox music theatre and process music. Following Krumm’s lead, Sheff moved to Ann Arbor in 1962 and became involved in the legendary ONCE Festivals of performing arts and experimental music run by composers Gordon Mumma and Robert Ashley. A sample of his early work is included in *Music From The ONCE Festival 1961-66*, a five CD set documenting the ONCE Group, recently released by New World Records from original monophonic recordings made for broadcast on the University of Michigan radio station. It includes a piece for flute and painstakingly spliced tape, manipulated in performance by Sheff. “From an early age I made recordings of sounds in the backyard, before tape recorders were portable,” he recalls. From that simple basis he evolved a sophisticated and singular approach to electroacoustic composition. This can be experienced on ‘Blue’ Gene Tyranny’s 1994 release *Country Boy Country Dog (Lovely Music)*, a set of linked pieces released from *How To Discover Music In The Sounds Of Your Daily Life*, his procedural score for research and composition with environmental sounds. For three months in 1966 Sheff made “audio snapshots” of daily life in Ann Arbor. A selection of these forms the core of *Country Boy Country Dog*. Intensified are examples of his “transference”: strange, spectral emanations brought out through electronic scanning and filtering of the environmental recordings.

Sheff is interested in sounds not just as phenomena in themselves but as they exist in each listener's consciousness. "You experience something and you have a certain sensation about it. The transforms try to highlight that sensation," he explains. "I don't write abstract music. My pieces come from what happens in my life. It's an interchange with the world." In this case the transforms act as a springboard for a further development, a warm, attractive electroacoustic piece entitled *The CBCD Variations For Soloist And Orchestra*, evoking an evening concert where musicians recall events of the day and the feelings surrounding them.

Sheff's youthful exploration of the potential of tape recording was driven by curiosity more than awareness of existing models. Back then he was unaware of musique concrète, yet he was making it. He still prizes that kind of personal discovery. "My music has to kick me in the head or heart and there has to be an unknown aspect," he says. "I don't want to say it has to be original and all that junk but the reality is that you have a strong impetus to do this thing, a tremendous impulse for it to be realized and usually it hasn't been done and it's not like something you know. It has to really move me. Performing, I listen to the music just as intimately as the audience. I don't always know where a piece is going. You just follow it to find out what's going on. That's how music teaches me things."

Pianists regularly ask Sheff to write for them. His compositions have been performed by exceptional players such as Lois Svard, Joseph Kubera and Nunt Tilles. His *Nocturne With And Without Memory*, recorded by Svard in 1994 on *With And Without Memory* (Lovely Music) is a fine example of a very open compositional style that Sheff adopted early on: "I'd just sit down and start writing," he says, "without even thinking about what I was writing: spontaneous composition with textures and the tactility of the sound." Still, he is uneasy about commissions. "What does it mean for me to write a piece for someone else? The spontaneous thing you can't really teach anybody, you just have to do it. Half the instrumentalists want everything written out in conventional notation and then they'll do beautiful things with that, but they're just not used to sitting down and improvising, which is a whole different way of thinking."

During his involvement with the ONCE Festival, Sheff met numerous jazz musicians who were drawn to the adventurous climate in Ann Arbor. In the mid-60s he toured with one of them, trumpeter Bill Dixon. Further jazz experience came ten years later when Carla Bley invited him to Europe as a second keyboard player with her group. "At some point even my composed music was improvised," he says. "You're coming up with the ideas. That's what I'm interested in. I'm less interested in playing a fixed chart with variations. That's a very restricted idea of improvisation; not the kind I do. I'm interested in absolute spontaneity. It's easier when I do solo things, but with some players like virtuoso Leroy Jenkins we can easily read each other and it's totally improvised. We don't even talk about what we're going to do. It just comes out and it's amazing."

Leroy Jenkins, a veteran of Chicago's AACM and a superb improviser, was introduced to Sheff by Mary Griffin and Carlota Schoolman, who run Providence Productions. The two musicians are currently working on a piece for voices, instrumentalists and interactive video called *Coincidence*, with a text by Griffin. Schoolman was the producer and Griffin the director of the 1984 Channel 4 television production of Robert Ashley's opera *Perfect Lives*. Early in the latter's development, Ashley invited Sheff to provide harmonies to flesh out the opera's piano playing character, Buddy. "Basically, I wrote a lot of the music," he relates. "Bob Ashley created the large rhythm pattern and the vocal parts. His text gave the overall atmosphere; the music is not a one to one match with it. It was improvised in the studio except for the harmonic things, which were in very strict cycle, contrasting with the rhythm cycle. When we laid down the tracks I didn't listen to the spoken texts at all."

Sheff's close involvement with Ashley's operas continues, although his role varies in each one. In performances of *Dust* (2000) he was seated at a synthesizer offstage. "In that case the general harmonies for each section were written by Bob and written through I created various kinds of tension as the piece went on, taking the general harmonic indication and deviating from that." His contribution to Ashley's *Celestial Excursions* (2003) is entirely modal. "Bob asked me to play the piano as though I'd never seen one before, to just make sound; which is what I do. There are variations on extremes, such as a tone cluster, misused." *Celestial Excursions* is scheduled for European performance, in Paris and Zurich, in August 2004.

Between 1969-81, Robert Ashley was director of the Center for Contemporary Music at Mills College in Oakland, California, which he made a vibrant hub of innovation. Sheff was invited there as a recording engineer, technician and teacher of studio craft. Having studied music theory with composer Otto Witz (himself a pupil of opera composer Engelbert Humperdinck), Sheff also taught classes in harmony and counterpoint in the Mills College music school and devised a new course exploring the history of jazz improvisation. As an engineer he was recording "everything from a guy playing his 12 string guitar to very sophisticated electronic works", encouraging once again many kinds of music within the same context.

Students at that time were undertaking all sorts of adventurous projects, including building their own computers. Numerous outsiders were drawn to the Center's artistic community and made use of its facilities. One of these outside users, Phil Perkins, later formed an electronics duo with Scott Fraser, called *The Bifurcators*. After long discussing a collaboration, Sheff joined them in California recently to record the suitably unhinged, atmospheric piano and interactive electronics improvisation *Like A Bird In The Wilderness* (Artifact).

Throughout his time at Mills College, Sheff's creative relationship with Ashley grew. "I have known Bob 41 years," he says, "and among other things I have learned from him many details about the physical voice, the nature of social interactions, practical

considerations about recording and the nature of sound, certain writing techniques, how art can really be effective and help people and I've enjoyed his wonderful sense of humour and rebelliousness in good clauses. But we don't share a compositional system. We don't even think of mine when it comes to music. If I find that a piece of art is too much like Bob, or someone else, in sound or some other characteristic, I stop doing the piece because it's something I don't have to do."

Saxophonist Peter Gordon worked with Sheff preparing the instrumental beds for Ashley's *Perfect Lives* and *Blue*. "Gene Tyranny has subsequently featured in various groups run by Gordon, including *The Love Of Life Orchestra*. "In Peter's groups I basically learnt how to play stopping concert piano, to get that out of my system. The others were all wind and percussion players. I had to learn to play like a wind player; I really learned how to play on time and percussionist David Van Tregheim helped me tremendously to understand percussive attack."

Gordon's outfits combine an experimentalist's savvy with the directness of rock, and that suited Sheff perfectly. He says, "Peter allowed me a long extended solo in every concert where I could really go out there... and I did. I looked forward to that. I remember we played the Brooklyn Academy of Music and he gradually brought everything down, all the instruments fell out except me. I decided to continue the process, leaving things out to the point of absolute silence. Then I slowly came back and at the end the band came in and the audience, which was large, roared."

Sheff's own pieces stay alive as material for continual development or evolutionary transformation. In response to a commission from baritone singer Tom Buckner he has just completed a set of songs, a continuation of *Somewhere In Arizona* 1970, recorded in 1990 for the electronic music anthology *Imaginary Landscapes* (Elektra Nonesuch). Returning to his solo piano composition *We All Watch The Sun And The Moon* (1992), he has recently developed a piece for piano and two string orchestras by means of "enfolding", a procedure he describes as a kind of musical equivalent to the time-space manifold in the physics of relativity. A newly written piece, *The Invention Of Memory*, investigates correlations between forms of memory and forms of music or compositional procedures. It's scored - currently - for voice, vibes, strings and piano, and will be premiered in San Francisco in February 2004. And Sheff is working, as he always is, on *The Diver's Son*, a longterm work in progress with spoken text and multiple choirs, addressing 38 subjects that have preoccupied him for much of his life, including UFOs, mass, movies and ancient artefacts. It's the *'Blue'* Gene Tyranny composition that in certain respects comes closest to a Robert Ashley piece. "He's figured out the vocal thing so well," Sheff acknowledges. "I'm trying to find another way of doing it." Take Your Time is out now on Lovely Music. *'Blue'* Gene Tyranny Website: members.aol.com/bluegene/

Above: The Prime Numbers 1986, featuring Robert Sheff (left) with the future Iggy Pop (right). **Below:** Sheff as "Blue" Gene Tyranny, the same year







THE PERFECT STROM

After surviving the storm that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall, East German sound manipulators Carsten Nicolai (pictured centre), Frank Bretschneider (left) and Olaf Bender pooled their resources as Raster-Noton and jacked into international art currents. Their minimalist electronic CDs and sound objects have sent power surges through a global grid connecting like-minded artists from Coil's *ElePH* to Tokyo's Ryoji Ikeda.

Words: Ben Borthwick
Photos: Sebastian Mayer

"Numbers have lost none of their mystical glamour" Henri Lefebvre, *The Critique of Everyday*

"Basically, to believe in mathematics you have to believe in God," says Carsten Nicolai, gesturing at the landscape before us. "You have to believe that something is creating all this – that it all has a certain mathematical purity. Mathematics is just something that we use to give the world expression – we want to know how the world functions. For me mathematics is one of the best philosophical ideas, because it is a really complex system of numbers and what you can do with them. But it does not exist in nature at all, it is just an abstract idea of how nature functions. It is quite amazing."

We are walking through London's Hyde Park on a cold, sunny autumn afternoon. Even within the park's geometry, order is quietly undermined by small but insistent microhabits that stubbornly refuse to conform to the plan. Nicolai, who worked as a landscape gardener in lieu of his compulsory German national military service before art college, has been admiring unusual varieties of chestnut trees. He points beyond them at a large open area and explains how it inverts the rest of the park's cycle. It is muddy during the winter because of poor drainage, but during the summer the damp ground will make the grass is more 'found than anywhere else. This analogy to the relationship between what Nicolai describes as "the beauty of numbers and the beauty of irregularity within order" is one of the cornerstones of his work as a sound and visual artist. It is irregularity in relation to order that fascinates him, hence his view that "the problem of mathematics, normal mathematics, is there is no room for mistakes. If you make mistakes you invalidate the process and can't follow the logic any more. Logic cannot accommodate mistakes and that is the big difference between maths and nature."

Whenever a discipline as absolute as mathematics fails to completely account for a phenomenon, the discrepancy takes on an almost spellbinding power. This mystique is key to Nicolai's fascination with scientific and mathematical processes. It is also the reason he constantly returns to the kinds of empirical experiments that lurked in the recesses of Thomas Edison's garage. Edison harnessed the power of electricity in his inventions, including the lightbulb and the phonograph, making him something of a magus for anyone interested in electronic arts. These inventions are the ancestral root of Nicolai's fascination with using electricity to reveal invisible and inaudible phenomena.

Carsten Nicolai is the public face and spokesman of the extravagantly named Raster-Noton Archiv Für Ton und Nichtton, the minimal electronics label that was officially founded in 1999 with longstanding colleagues Olaf Bender and Olaf Bredemeyer. The label is an artist-run label without a fixed roster; rather, it has a fluctuating attendance around a core of artists who often release across a broad swathe of licensed labels. "The label is a space," says Nicolai, "which is the reason we give it the subtitle 'archive for sound and non-sound'. Basically, you create a space in between this polarity and it is a space that we need. It is a platform, and that platform has to grow with us."

Nicolai's tonal electronics are released under the moniker Noto, his more textured post-art era is also Noto (Alva being Edison's middle name), and Cyelo is his mutating loops collaboration with Japanese arch-minimalist Ryoji Ikeda. Komnet is Bredemeyer's crystalline rhythmic project (his own-name material is exclusively licensed to Mike Plateaux), while Bender's

propensity for rhythms, filter sweeps and test tone experiments is released as Bytezone. His debut album *Feld* has just come out on Bine Music. All these elements come together in the Raster-Noton 'supergroup' Signal, whose only recording is the excellent *Centrum* (2000). Each Signal track serves as a prism that refracts each member's approaches. Raster-Noton evenings, according to Bredemeyer, consist of "our three solo performances, then [we] come together for the Signal project. Some things are fixed on the computer, but we try to improvise a bit as well, both for the sound and visuals."

All three grew up in the East German city of Chemnitz when it was still known as Karl-Marx-Stadt, where Bender and Bredemeyer were in AG Geige, the only group in town. Bender is still based near Chemnitz and runs Raster-Noton's operations from an ancient farmhouse on top of a hill. Nicolai spent the mid-80s shuttling between Chemnitz and New York and moved to Berlin permanently in 1999, followed a year later by Bredemeyer.

Some time after our discussion in Hyde Park, I am sitting with Nicolai in his Berlin apartment. Bredemeyer and Bender soon arrive, but Nicolai is the most loquacious, happy to translate, expand on, and occasionally correct the others' statements.

"Chemnitz is a small town," Bredemeyer states. Nicolai adds that while they didn't know each other personally, they all knew who each other were "just by seeing each other from going to the same clubs, the same places". Amid the tumult of the Berlin Wall coming down and in a diminishing market for Residents-influenced punk outfits from the East, AG Geige was shelved. "It was the time of reunification," remembers Bredemeyer, "and we didn't have an audience because everyone went to see the bands they had missed for their whole lifetime. It was also a time when we had to redefine our lives. We had also the first time we had a really good rehearsal room. We had a good situation to do music but no band. Olaf and Jan [Kummer, AG Geige's singer] opened a record store, then Olaf worked for Indigo distribution, but on the weekend we met up and did some music together. With AG Geige I was always making my own experimental stuff, using tapes, and loops that were really long, like ten metres – a whole room full of machines." After a couple of years holed up in the studio, Bredemeyer had plenty of solo material but its microscopic detail was out of sync with the booming German Techno scene. Rastermusic began in 1996 as a small, self-produced CD-R label for his quiet, minimal electronics.

Listening to the 1997 'compilation' *Produkt*, stretch there is no mistaking Bredemeyer's role as the main force behind the early days of the relationship between sound and space in Bredemeyer's lush rhythms, where the manipulation of abstract sounds and pitches takes place in a controlled clinical soundscape, makes sense in relation to the label's name. By calling themselves Rastermusic, Bredemeyer and Bender clearly stated that their interests were visual as well as sonic. A raster is the tiny space between pixels, the interstitial fabric of digital imagery. "We were graphic designers," he says, "so we had a lot to do with raster points which we were working with on the screen every day, so for us it was a nice idea because the music we did also completely on the computer. And because you can divide the rhythm into rasters, you have units and you can measure."

Nicolai, meanwhile, had founded his own Noto imprint in 1995 as a way to release his own Noto sound project, as well as experimental soundworks by other artists. The name plays on both the German 'no ton', meaning no sound, and the English 'not on', ironically referencing the quiescence of the equipment. It began not so much as a label as a loose conceptual umbrella "committed to experimental forms of time perception and the collection of signs and sounds" regardless of their final form as CDs, installations, publications or performances. When Nicolai needed to produce the sound element of an installation, he contacted Bredemeyer, who recalls, "We did graphics for a catalogue of his work and one day he asked for a DAT recorder and asked me to help him cut some music and master it. So we worked together and I really enjoyed it. It was doing loops – not synchronised or rhythmic like mine, but free loops. Very minimal, very sparse. So instead of paying me I asked him to release this on Rastermusic, and Noto was the sixth Rastermusic release."

This was the 1997 Mike-Makro collaboration with B, aka Phil Sone's Mike Verno, for an installation of the same name. Confusingly, its catalogue number was both Noto 04 and Rastermusic 06. Although the labels co-existed in parallel for a few more releases, the CD had set out many of the concerns that formed the basis of Raster-Noton. The label's polymorphic history has included the first solo releases from artists including Kim Cascone, Goem, Nbo and CoH, various publications, and winning the Ars Electronica Golden Nica prize for the international 20-2000 series. In 2002 the label even set up a temporary shop in conjunction with one of Nicolai's exhibitions at Watani Museum in Tokyo.

"Growing up in East Germany," says Olaf Bender, "there was an information underflow. If you liked music you listened to all kinds, jazz and punk, new wave, whatever." Ironically, in the East the scarcity of resources, both in terms of available music and the money with which to acquire it, engendered strong social bonds. Record crates were a common phenomenon, where members rotated their collections and tapes, pooling knowledge and music through deep, committed listening sessions. David Byrne & Brian Eno's *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts* was a landmark they immediately cite, and Nicolai mentions Laurie Anderson's *Master Heartbreak*, while Bredemeyer opts for Can. Occasional opportunities to spend comparatively huge sums of money on imported records at home or during rare trips to Hungary were deliberated on for months in advance. Nicolai still has a map of Budapest with 15 specialist record stores marked on it, and remembers with a laugh how, given the choice between an extra two weeks' holiday and buying one album, he would take the record every time.

"I think what I recognised later on," he continues, "is that because of this lack of information you really start to specialise in non-popular music, not top ten, because that didn't interest us that much. If somebody discovered something new, because of this existing circle it was really a force to get deeper and deeper into the music. You got a very deep knowledge of this kind of stuff, and I notice that you sometimes get people who grew up in the West and have easy access to this kind of information but didn't know so much as we did."

"The point is that you come back to it and listen, or read, again and again," adds Bender.

"I remember when you first got a record," Nicolai interrupts, "sometimes you didn't like it. But you spent



so much time with it and gave it so much space. You listened for half a year to the same record to get out of it what it meant. Today it is not possible to listen like that, you just listen a few times, or maybe you just skip through it."

"The funny thing," says Bender, "is that when you watched [films by] Tarkovsky it was not boring."

"His films are quite long, they seem three or four hours long," explains Nicolai. "He lived like this. At least half of the year was like this because winter and autumn had exactly this feeling. Now it is a totally different perception for us. They are such slow films and you recognise, 'OK, we have changed.'"

"What was very real for us," he reflects, "was that there was no musical background in Chemnitz or Eastern Germany apart from maybe in Berlin. But in Chemnitz there was nothing apart from AG Geige which was the first known band who even had a contract. There was no studio existing in this town, no other musicians."

"No drummer or anything," says Bender. "This was why we wrote our first drum machine."

"It is not only that," Bretschneider interjects. "I am not sure that if there was a drummer we would have worked with them. Drum machines, at this time, were also much more interesting for me because you can do it at home, do it alone. But we didn't really have a drum machine, it was just something with presets. There was tango and rumba, samba and things like this. I liked the samba style!"

Beyond AG Geige and the record circles, the Chemnitz music scene revolved around cassette labels (namely, one run by Bretschneider) and the radio. Nicolai mentions the Bayern Zwei station where they first heard Manfred Monk, Steve Reich, Louie Anderson and other avant garde musicians. Closer to home, Bretschneider recalls how "every week there was a really good show that played punk and all the new stuff from England and America and West Germany. Also from East Germany they played some independent and underground things, and we sent in a tape which is how AG Geige got started."

"Gmsk," a track from the most recent Kornel album GSK, could have been written as an epitaph to that time. The opening sentence ("They listened to the music") eventually pushes through and finishes the sentence with "... that came from the radios."

Nicolai draws connections between his musical and artistic output and his views about having grown up within the political structure of East Germany before the Berlin Wall came down in 1989. "There is a quite nice word in German when you have a perfume and," he gestures with his finger, "you spray 'phif-phif'." Altmeyer suggests, "This is very nice," he replies, "delighting in the scientific metaphor. 'Atomising is also being spread.' This is similar to the word 'diffuse'. It comes from a neo-Platonic view. Every particle carries the same information as the bigger object it came from. It is a kind of micro-macro thing." While a political subtext may not immediately leap out from any of the Raster-Noton releases, viewed within this framework it's not a huge step to reimagining an analogy in this system where the State is a vast entity made up of individuals who are organised into blocks and represented by the phrase "we, the people."

"Yeah, yeah," he says, nodding his head, "this is something really complicated because the 'we' doesn't exist. It is individual – I get very scared with this 'we'. I know exactly what I am talking about because when I grew up in the East, there was always this 'we', but in the end we realised that 'we' never

existed. It was just a phrase."

The relationship between the part and the whole generates one of the principal dynamics of many forms of sonic, visual or political representation. But where exactly does the information reside? Nicolai is unequivocal: "For me it is both, in the same intensity. I really believe in smaller systems and that if you atomise an idea and spread it out and have it on a quite personal, recognisable and flexible level, then you can change much more in a bigger political context. This is quite interesting for us, again, because if we recognise this then we also recognise how much possibility we have as individuals."

Most Raster-Noton releases, I point out, have an overtly formalist aesthetic. Nicolai nods appreciatively. "Something that is really important for us, coming from the East, is that we do not inscribe political meaning into the label. Basically, while we were growing up, everything was inscribed with meaning. This is also where these minimalist ideas come from: to prevent it from delivering pre-existing information – in the worst case you would say propaganda – or delivering any kind of existing opinion about the thing and what it is."

"This is how the Clear Series started," he continues. "We wanted to release the music without anything except the music and what is necessary to carry it out." The transparent jewel case that standardises every CD release into a generic economic unit was first analysed with the Clear Series. "For us the relationship between graphics and sound is very simple," Nicolai elaborates. "We always try to reduce. I think the identity of Raster-Noton is also very closely connected to this very stripped down, minimal design of the series. It became almost a kind of style and a lot of packaging now copies what we did, say, five or six years ago. A very nice example is the Clear Series: just a blank CD and a clear case. Sound is for us a material and the cover is the package to store the sound."

A little clarification is required. Transparent sleeves with skeletal details around the transparent boxes containing CDs that look blank. Closer inspection reveals a small rim of text on the outside edge, presenting the commodity in its least adorned form, leaving the consumer to question exactly what is being passed on. (The artist's name, which is usually about how quickly those strategies are recuperated and used stylistically. "I don't know how often I saw it already but it is quite common now," he sighs. "But in those days it was a total shock that you could see a CD without a cover, the idea didn't exist at that time.")

Each series acts as a window for the presentation of an artist rather than a determining set of ideas to which the artist must respond. "The Clear Series was more interested in the conceptual and experimental," continues Nicolai, "sometimes not even interested in the rhythmic." After Rastermax and the Clear Series came the Visual Series, which was the follow-up to the Raster releases – still interested in rhythmic correlations and more musical than experimental aspects. "These CDs come in artistic bags adorned with biohazard graphics. 'We have Cyelo as well, which will just make its own series probably. And now come two new series. One is called Raster Post,' which has taken up where the Static Series left off. 'We also did this [OJasic book and my Polyfoto and Autopilot catalogues. As we worked on these we understood how much more sense the book with a CD makes for us. From the working aspect and how we feel that we can transport much more of our ideas through this format.'"

Since Nicolai joined them, within the immediate sphere of the label each member has a loosely defined role. According to Bender, "Frank is more the

producer for the technical questions. I am coming more from the distribution side". He runs the office having worked for distributors in the past and is the most interested in doing the graphics and the day to day running of the label; and with a certain poetry, he says, "Carsten is for the visions."

The biggest vision for the label so far was 1999's notoriously ambitious 20/2000 series. For a label that can, at best, describe its releases as subtle as erratic and its distribution channels as selective, releasing one 20 minute CD each month for a year in the run up to the millennium required a gear shift. "I think it was the closest and most intense working period," Nicolai admits. "I was very involved with the conceptual background while Olaf really helped with the details of making it happen, from the pressing plant to the graphics, and to keep the whole thing going, because I was living in America at this time."

As well as assembling an impressive group of artists including Coil after Coil, Ephig, Wolfgang Voigt and Thomas Brinkmann, the packaging marked the series out as unique. This is the first time the now familiar scallop shell case was used commercially, and each CD was clear plastic with only a partial chrome inner section enclosing the information. The only identification mark on the cases is a sticker showing a Heinecke bottle, a physical and philosophical conundrum describing four dimensions using only three, its surface simultaneously interior and exterior.

"This symbol is basically an endless space," explains Nicolai. "If you look closer you see this little detail of 12 little dots which all infiltrate this three dimensional infinity loop. The idea was that this is a time period that you infiltrate. That is it. 12 little dots dropped in this kind of time space. Everyone was invited to produce a 20 minute track that has a relation to this kind of cutting edge, or movement from 1999 to 2000. Make a manifesto of how music should be for you in the year 2000, like in school when you have to draw what your city will be like in the future. Everyone treated it very personally. I have to say. This is the kind of intensity that makes it so interesting."

Bretschneider and Nicolai have each collaborated with their artist. As well as Bretschneider's 2003 album with Taylor Deupree, Balance (Nile's Plateaus), Nicolai's quiet 2001 avant-garde collaboration with Opzale (aka Thomas Knak), and Nicolai's recent Vroom (Raster-Noton) with Ruyck Sakamoto, Cyelo is Nicolai's longterm project with Ryoji Ikeda, initiated when Ikeda misunderstood Nicolai's invitation to perform under the theme "cycle" as an invitation to perform together. Their Cyelo CD (2001) demonstrates a mutual fascination with tonal and rhythmic textures in the aggressively stilled microsound of its structure, which Nicolai links to his fascination with artist Takashi Suganuma, who, he has proposed, "has the exact mutations of looped structures within natural systems, which informed my early starting points about mistakes and errors," explains Nicolai.

"At first you deal with total regularities," he goes on. "I work with measuring systems, with quite a logical background, very simple programs to create distances and really precise sinewaves. What I do is based on classical compositions and architectural ideas, so for me it is very important to see the sound and to work on it. When I hear the sounds, I know exactly what I want to change, and I do this graphically. I don't change them over filters or anything. I just cut things out. When you work with editing programs like I do, then you are really close to the original form. Basically you are cutting all the time lines. Sinewave lines, or



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square shape, or triangle shape or whatever. This is quite interesting. I think, that graphical sound idea." On the 2001 *alpha* note release *Transform* (Mile Plateau), the principle of cutting out all extraneous information is taken to an extreme. "Basically there are no melodies there – if there are melodies they are only in the beats. It is quite extreme to have melodies in the beats themselves so you don't have any melodies playing any more. But they are melodies, even without knowing sometimes, and this is quite fascinating – how far you can go with reducing things and still make something work. In all my work I try to cut the apple down to the core, to what is really essential and what you want to express. With *Transform* I chose a very complicated way to do it. I did not use a sequencing program, but edited each line so every single tone exists as a simple single file. I create a kind of matrix, like a DNA that looks like the pattern of the rhythms."

"It is really amazing how deep you can go into sound itself," he continues. "Even if the patterns look recognizable from R&B, all the elements are quite unique – it is totally opposite in some ways. This is the reason it is called *Transform*. Normally if you want an R&B rhythm you would go for specific machines that will create those sounds or even use sample CDs or whatever. But on this I just analysed the structure and made this kind of DNA pattern of it."

One of the most emblematic images in 90s sound art is Nicola's *Basisset* Note (2000), a row of four Technics turntables, each adorned by a transparent vinyl "O". It is a striking, utterly seductive assemblage, playing on the sleek design of these machines – unbreakable workhorses – which have transformed contemporary music culture. On the Technics, its functionality doesn't compromise its fetishistic qualities. Chrome rectangles flirt with cylinders and oracles; dots on the edge of the spinning turntable glow Marianne red, creating the illusion of irregular orbits spinning past at different speeds, even reversing when the pitch is changed. Nicola's vinyl participates in this spectacle, each with 12 concentric circles etched into its surface and centre labels with two further circles, the large one containing an infinity symbol, the small one simply a black hole through the vinyl.

The 48 locked grooves contain a mixture of rhythms and frequencies that can be randomly combined by members of the public. Depending on the person activating the sculpture, rhythms might tick and splutter, never settling as the needles are moved from one groove to the next and the pitch is shifted up or down. A further level of disorientation occurs when the vinyl spins on its off-centre hole, creating an irregular orbit that throws the loops further off kilter in homage to Kepler's discoveries that planetary orbits are not Copernican concentricities. However, if they are left alone and allowed to settle, an order begins to emerge, rhythms pull away then swing back into sync as if by gravitational force while static frequencies ebb and flow. The possible permutations of this work are as random as they are vast while the noise and pulses are like an ode to the electrical signals received by galactic telescopes.

The freemove loops of *Mikro Makro* or Nicola's solo projects have a different complexion when seen in an experimental laboratory context. Some information is made legible by being able to see how it is constructed. In Nicola's *Helix* installation, 2001, at South London's Milch Gallery, four shallow ripple baths lay in a row, propped up by a speaker cone under each corner. Each CD player broadcast a

frequency band calibrated to the specific architectural conditions of the space. As they slowly hummed through their cycles, the frequencies constantly stretched and bent the water's molecules, shifting the surfaces from absolute flatness through spiropgraphic swirls to geometric grids, recorded at specific frequencies in a series of photographs hung around the gallery.

Like much of his other sound and artwork, this piece encompasses test tone experiments but also recontextualises early 20th century experiments with electricity. With minimal intervention, Nicola emphasises the modular readymade qualities of the experiments and objects he uses in what he describes as "an attempt to erase the signature of the artist". However, as is often the case with science, philosophy, and other forms of objective process, there is an exquisite abstract level at which the phenomenon is set adrift from its own logic. Echoing the instability of the sound/water relationship, the apparatus starts to mutate as the water trays become constantly evolving geometric canvases, while thick coils of cables unwind into modernist line drawings.

"You have to control the basic setup," Nicola clarifies. "But the process itself you cannot control at all. You just create the environment where the process starts. You have to be quite precise, and in the art world this kind of precision is unusual. But if you look at scientific experiments, then what I do is absolutely not precise. I don't think in these categories, really. For me, working as an artist is basically not believing in models, not believing in this already existing world structure; just asking questions and maybe connecting the wrong things at the wrong moment to create a new kind of situation."

There could hardly be a more explicit example than *Telefunken*, Nicola's *Clear Series* project from 2000. Designed to be listened to with the CD player plugged into the television's S-Video and audio jacks, the sonic frequencies determine the image on the screen in an exquisitely simple narrative that moves through a variety of tones from 50 to 1600Hz, at times with the nauseous seduction of a *Blindfold Riley* painting. As usual, Nicola's sound creates a narrative but from a distance, as if the machine is stretching itself to articulate something from within its limited means. And it is precisely this distance that makes Nicola's music and artwork so beguiling. The cool look and clinical finish of his music and artwork resist the idea of human involvement – he becomes the spectral figure whose interventions steer the work toward an uncanny familiarity, as if the sound or image is mimicking the patterns of thought and rhythms of intuition.

"This kind of interference," Nicola says during our first conversation in Hyde Park, "is a very interesting interface for sound, it is a model for thinking. Something I am really trying to do is present art pieces where you lose your identity as an artist. Where your identity gets created over, the people see just a space or a set-up that starts creating after I leave. It is very different to how I started – doing paintings is quite the opposite. You always express your inner world into something and then you leave a very individual note, like a handwritten letter or something like that. But at the moment I really try to avoid this kind of handwritten note. I am really looking for this kind of irregularity, this kind of mistake where you start a creative process. Something that is not static, where every day could be different." □ *Komet's Gold*, *Pixel's Display* and *Sonking's Tap* are all out now on RasterPost. Website: www.rasterpost.de

Charts

Playlists from the outer limits

Northern Unlights Of The 90s

Mayhem
De Mysterio (Sanctus) (DGP)
Delirium
The Refuse (Black Mark)
Donnerstag
Anno Domini (VAP)
Hazeon
Der Stern Beging Vor (Mascottery)
Bazooka
Hiv Spirit Tar Ous (Mascottery)
Bazooka
Rise Above (Mascottery)
Darkhouse
A Stone In The Northern Sky (Peaceville)
Darkhouse
Under A Funeral Moon (Peaceville)
Darkhouse
Tearaway Hanger (Peaceville)
Darkhouse
Peacebound (Moonlight)
Darkhouse
The Sinnerman (No Fashion)
Enslaved
Vinterg Vild (DGP)
Abnathan
De Sinnerman (No Fashion) (DGP)
Krepper
Empire (Candlelight)
Usher
Mistral Macgill (No Not Found)

A Pox On You 15

Green Yelva
Immortal Combustion (Schemata)
Black Kitchin
Quarant (Black)
Quarant
O (Ludack)
Black Kitchin
Aurichia (Playhouse)
The Children's Television Workshop
Parents... The Polytechnic Low Cut (Drunk Fish)
Veritas
Shook City Shookers 1 (Polystar Japan)
Mistral
The Old War (Mistral)
Green Yelva
The Accusation (Acute)
Electroacoustic
21st Century Top (Elektronik)
The Incredible String Band
The Children's Television Workshop (Elektronik/Sundown)
Sonnen
Cousin (Mistral)
Stark Reading
Now (Green Yelva)
Samuel Patterson
On Mistral (Green Yelva/GRM)
Kenneth Hagen
Aurichia (Mistral)
Les Ruzhans Desolates
Le 12 Mars 1977 A Technique (No label)

15 Records I Got For One Canadian Dollar Or Less

David Byrne
The Real And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars (RCA)
The Clash
Combat Rock (Epic)
John Coltrane
A Love Supreme (Impulse)
Lee Carter & Linda Hirst
Privilege (Rough Trade)
Bob Dylan
A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall (Capitol)
Karen Pryor
Takes Of Blues 12" (Pox View Art International)
Robert Fripp
God Save The Queen/Under Heavy Manners (Gothic ECG)
Swingline 'Champagne' King
Mistral Box 12" (RCA)
BlackTree
Takes Europe Express (Capitol/EMI)
Mistral
Love In The Message (Squidhouse version) (RCA)
Charlie Parker
Archives Of Folk Music: Jazz Series (Gothic)
Paul Floyd
Mistral (Mistral/EMI)
The Rolling Stones
England's Newest Headlines (Dance)
Putti Smith
Radio Ethiopia (Kala)
Yelva
2001: A Space Odyssey OST (Elektronik sleeve version) (MGM)

The Office Ambience

Most
Most Most (P.V.)
Tragik
Bullshit (The Jockey)
Dave Roberts
Be Mine Tonight (Kinky)
Golden Cops
Album vol 2 (Tobias/EMI)
COXO
Kilo Kilo Kilo (The Jockey)
Mistral
Complete Studio Recordings NYC 1977-1980 (Gothic/Squidhouse)
Mistral Ambience
Saint Agnes Fountain (Radiohead/EMI)
Gary Smith
Tobias/Squidhouse (Radiohead)
Regentville/Squidhouse 88
No Business 1" (Pox View Recordings)
Veritas
Berlin Springs (Acute)
Dewar's Day
Lullaby Day (Mistral)
Hume Joachim Imber
Lullaby (Stargate)
Mistral
The Sands And The Stars (Dance)
Vibacathedral Orchestra
The Queen Of Queens (Mistral)
Robert Wyatt
Solar Flares Burn For You (Canecone)

Compiled by Stephen O'Malley, Sun 00,
www.mistral.org

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Reviews



AGF reviewed in Soundcheck

Soundcheck A-Z

AGF 51
 Jon Appleton 51
 Tetuzi Akiyama 51
 Akiyama/Francis/Kneale/Neville/Watkins 51
 Birchville Cat Motel & Bruce Russell 51
 The Books 51
 Buck 55 53
 Harold Budd 53
 Charalambides 53
 Deborah Day 53
 Jad Fair & Bill Wells 63
 The Fall 53
 JB Floyd 55
 Jonny Greenwood 55
 Gully Connector Und Tabata 55
 Lou Harrison 55
 Kronos Quartet 57
 Maher Shalal Hash Baz 52
 Ilhan Mimaroglu & Freddie Hubbard 57
 Hans Joachim Imler 56
 I Treni Inerti 56
 Jazz Composers Alliance Orchestra 56
 Khanate 56
 Movietone 57
 Nettie 56
 Nurse With Wound 58
 Anthony Pateras & Robin Fox 58
 Pei 65
 Pluramon 54
 Luctor Pense 58
 Steve Rodon 59
 Steve Rodon/Tu M' 59
 Pharoah Sanders 59
 Archie Shepp 59
 Martin Siewert & Martin Brandlmayr 59
 Gary Smith 59
 Snawklor 61
 Stars As Eyes 61
 Cecil Taylor 61
 Tenjo Sajiki 61
 Totonho & Os Cabra 63
 Various: *Amplify 2002: Balance* 50
 Bill Wells Big Band 63
 Bill Wells Octet 63
 Robert Wyatt 65
 Daijun Yao 65
 Otomo Yoshihide 65
 Carlos Zingaro & Voicecrack 65

Columns

Size Matters 60
 The Compiler 62
 The Boomerang 64
 Avant Rock 66
 Critical Beats 67
 Dub 68
 Electronica 69
 HipHop 70
 Jazz 71
 Modern Composition 72
 Outer Limits 73

Print Run 74

Are We Not Men? We Are Devo
 By Jade Delinger & David Giffels
The People's Music: Selected Journalism
 By Ian MacDonald
Turn On Your Mind
 By Jim DeRogatis
Got A Revolution! The Turbulent Flight Of Jefferson Airplane
 By Jeff Tamarkin
Seeking The Soul: The Music Of Alfred Schnittke
 Edited by George Odum

Cross Platform 78

The New Videoteurs David Stubbs on the music films of Chris Cunningham, Michel Gondry and Spike Jonze
Reviews Gin and Stan Brakhage on DVD; Argos Festival 2003 and Pan's O Mensch! installation
The Inner Sleeve Savage Pencil on The Mothers Of Invention
Go To: Our monthly Net trawl

On Location 82

De Stijl/Freedom From Festival Of Music
 Minneapolis, USA
DEAF: Dublin Electronic Arts Festival
 Dublin, Ireland
Kill Your Timid Notion
 Dundee, UK
Dissonanze
 Rome, Italy
Rome Wasn't Burned In A Day
 London, UK
Melt-Banana
 Birmingham, UK
Electric City
 Vancouver, Canada

Soundcheck

This month's selected CDs, vinyl and singles



I am the Cosmos: Sachiko M and Aze Yoshida

VARIOUS AMPLIFY 2002: BALANCE ERSTWHILE 033-043 7XCD + DVD

Generally speaking, the box set is the music industry's equivalent of a casket; an ornate container where the lovingly embalmed past is laid to rest, its praises sung and its remains stashed away, with invitation rights in perpetuity. Erstwhile Records founder An Abbey clearly had something very different in mind when he conceived *Amplify 2002: Balance*, a seven CD plus DVD set named for the three-day festival of electroacoustic improvisation that he mounted in Tokyo with leading European and Japanese musicians in October last year. True, one purpose of the *Amplify* box is to create a memory space for eight of the festival's 12 sets. But beyond that Abbey's stated goal was to somehow recreate "the experience of what it was like to be in Tokyo in late October 2002, witnessing this incredible week of music".

Apart from making the audacious claim that this small but dynamic scene is worthy of immortalizing in so grand a fashion, the *Amplify* box is also meant to evoke the dislocation, sensory overload and extremes of calm and frenzy that marked this particular stretch (vividly described by Brian Marley in *The Wire* 226). This is achieved by surrounding the festival sets with two discs of performances outside the purview of the main event, a new studio recording by Günter Müller and Toshimaru Nakamura made immediately before the festival, and a video documentary. In addition, Yoko Zama's opalescent photography and Frodenko Paezold's elegant design work add immeasurably to the set's impact.

Excellent shows recorded both before and after the main festival, the opening disc sets the stage by featuring music of quiet concentration. Deep listening is compulsory. The odd eruption aside, Thomas Lehn and Nakamura's collaboration primarily consists of tiny chirps, buzzes and drones. Taku Sugimoto later joins in, waiting long, sonorous notes and bowed drones over Lehn's mezzo-frenzy. Austerity is a natural assumption for an Off Site performance by Nakamura, Müller and Tetsu Akizawa. Yet, despite its relatively placed surface, their collaboration teems with event. Christof Kutzmann and Nakamura patiently conjure humming, buzzing drone fields, occasionally punctuated by laptop belches and mixing board squeals.

Disc two, titled *Tint*, finds Nakamura and Müller in the studio days before the festival. Careful and

sensitive collaborators, the two prove an appropriate match, as Nakamura's peeps and peels glint out from amongst Müller's deep, rolling contours. Two brief opening tracks produced by Nakamura feature the session's most rhythmically forthright music; three tracks mixed by Müller chart expansive landscapes by turns bucolic and bristling.

The festival proper begins on the third disc. In a sense, it runs counter to Erstwhile's raison d'être of introducing seemingly compatible improvisers into previously untested partnerships in order to thwart rote patterns of response, as most of *Amplify 2002*'s combinations had been tested previously. That the musicians were able to find genuinely new things to say is partially a testament to their skills as listeners and collaborators, plus the result of the inherent unpredictability of the tools with which they play their trade. Computers fail and analogue synthesizers are obstinate: empty samplers and no-input mixing boards practically guarantee a measure of entropy.

Constructed from austere materials — Ami Yoshida's chirps, squeals and gurgles punctuating the essential peep of Sachiko M's *serenades* and the tactile crumbles of her contact mass — a Cosmos set takes time to deliver. By its midway point, Sachiko's almost continuous din verges on maddening. But somehow, as its little clicks and whispers subside into a dem buzz of static, the performance has become wholly engrossing.

Subsequent performances are more easily assimilated. Lehn opens a set with Keith Rowe and Marcus Schmickler in a combative stance that the others are largely content to support at first. The trio ultimately achieve equilibrium, assisting yawning chaos where each voice is distinct. Müller and Otomo Yoshihide offer a more conventional sense of narrative drama and timing, with climaxes of shocking physicality. Lehn and Schmickler's duo collaboration, too, is full of serrated edges, jagged waves, blips and squelches, as they constantly prod one other into mad, bold dashes and considered pauses. Incapable of being uninteresting, theirs is the bluest, most animated encounter of the festival.

Respite arrives with Sugimoto, Kutzmann and Burkhard Stangl. Their subdued set moves slowly and deliberately, each note ringing out and fading away before the next replaces it. A set by Rowe and Nakamura lacks the fierce shock of their recorded encounter. Weather Sky, instead revealing how they have become even more acutely sensitive and

Steve Smith opens a pandora's box of quiet noises that documents the Erstwhile label's encounters with Tokyo's Off Site scene

interactive partners since that earlier meeting — in itself an argument that reunions are not to be shunned, even in this most transitory of musical genres. Taking more time than most to establish common ground, Stangl and Müller eventually achieve a state of hypnotic drift, with Stangl's guitar skittering and soaring like a bird navigating uncharted terrain. The closing set by Nakamura and Sachiko M finds both players more attentive, varied in texture and gnostic with space than was evident in their previous Erstwhile outing. do.

The final audio disc features a performance of three pages from Cornelius Cardew's *Treatise* by a guitar septet that includes Rowe, Otomo, Sugimoto, Akizawa, Nakamura, Stangl and Oren Ambarchi. Although Cardew's score leaves a great deal to the performer's interpretation, it's surely no illusion that the performance sounds considerably more measured than the subsequent free improvisation by the same ensemble. And after all the electronics dominating the rest of the set, the predominance of wood tones in both performances offers a comforting earthiness, irrespective of how sparse the actual music is.

Nakamura aside, all the performers allow film maker Jonas Leddington's camera to observe their methods at extremely close range in *Balance Beams*, the 106-minute documentary that completes *Amplify 2002*. Especially valuable given that relatively few listeners will ever see many of these musicians live, the film animates the music in unsuspected ways, offering glimpses of Lehn's manic physicality and Yoshida's almost complete motionlessness.

Rewinding, Leddington approaches his subject as an active collaborator and interpreter, more than a documentarist. He pares each set to its essence, illuminating it through aspired cuts, juxtapositions and dissolves, and suggesting visual parallels to the busting staccato, bucolic countryside and baffling TV broadcasts happening outside Off Site. In addition to his film, the DVD also includes a valuable segment where Rowe succinctly explains the methodology of *Treatise* to the guitar septet, outtakes from other, non-festival sets, and 5.1 surround-sound versions of the Rowe/Lehn/Schmickler and Müller/Otomo performances. Hopefully, the disc will eventually be granted a firmer place in this highly desirable, limited edition art sacropantheon has been scratched up by fervent collectors. Its revelations deserve the widest possible availability. □



Remontage de blanc: Toni and Reiko Kudo

MAHER SHALAL HASH BAZ
BLUES DU JOUR
 GEOGRAPHIC GEOGRAPHIC

The gentle, melancholy delivery of Maher Shalal Hash Baz conceals a gutsy determination on the part of lead singer Toni Kudo – it must take a hard-headed artistic vision to preserve his group's ramshackle, esoteric/amateur style over 20 years. Working at speed probably helps too – the 41 tracks of *Blues Du Jour* were recorded by the seven-piece group in a hectic two days at East Kibunde Arts Centre in Scotland, with help from local musicians and members of The Pastels. The Geographic label's first release in 2000 (*From A Summer To Another Summer*) was a retrospective of this already legendary Japanese naïf/psychedelic collective, and the new album claims to be their first album-length set of new songs since 1996's highly collectible triple CD *Return To Rock Mess*.

The Maher Shalal sound is a ragged take on classic pop chords, where drowsy drums and guitars engage tender euphonium and sax, as if Syd Barrett had joined the Salvation Army. Kudo's wife Reiko contributes trumpet and child-angel scattling, notably on the wonderful odd-Brazilian song "Post Office". Kudo himself, singing in English, draws rich inspiration from that least likely of sources, the Old Testament. "I've eaten ashes themselves, just like bread," he tells us on "Pelican Of Wilderness". Maher Shalal Hash Baz, in case you were wondering, was the name of the son of the prophet Isaiah and means, "The spoil spoils, the prey preys on." Kudo loves this arcane mode: "I don't know the man of whom you speak," he sings on "Peter Says". And the album's best song, "What's Your Business Here

Eligh?", is another tale of wilderness encounters with God. In the hands of an ancient Caribbean singer or Bob Dylan, this material would seem natural. Sung in a Japanese voice over a teetering, sometimes slapdash, avant pop backing, it's very odd indeed.

And yet the poignant folk balladry of "Eligh" is Maher at their most accessible. Other songs here are equally successful, but display a talent for off the wall music arranging that would do Tom Waits proud. "Soldier Of Lead" owes a lot to the racing euphoniums of Hiro Nakazaki, jumping through the hoops of parallel harmonies like baby elephants. This delightful song conjures up a timeless image of a soldier staring at the clouds and then, like a biblical psalmist, starting to worry about sowing and reaping. Reiko Kudo's sky-high voice dabs on watercolour splashes of backing vocal. It's as if Kudo has dipped his bucket into several wells: the rage of the Old Testament prophets, the poetry of the psalmist, the stern pop rules of The Velvet Underground, and the liberating cosmic whimsy of The Incredible String Band (though without any tendency to sprawl – all is concise here). More than once I was reminded of the long forgotten Dr Strangely Strange, '70s Irish folk psychedelists who read James Joyce and comic books, and then went their own sweet way.

So where has this Tokyo primitivism sprung from? From their late 70s duo Noise, through performing with guitarist Koji Haino at the legendary Minor club, to acid folk alongside Chie Muka in Che-SHIZU. Toni and Reiko Kudo have long been active on the Tokyo underground. Ten also formed Tokyo Suicide – a Suicide tribute outfit – and supported Kenichi Takeda's AMusik collective, several of whose members were arrested after a failed attempt on the Emperor's life.

Don't be fooled by the naïf psychedelia of Maher Shalal Hash Baz, says a bewitched Clive Bell

Political disillusionment and religious conversion led to Toni forming Maher with Reiko and Nakazaki at the beginning of the 80s.

Maher's delicate mangling of the English language – "Soldier Of Lead" begins, "You that is watching the wind" – may add to the impression of children at play, but a great deal of quick-thinking musicality is hidden just beneath the surface. "Futury" is more opaque. Maybe it's another lament of a despairing prophet, but the group's muttering feels a little like we are eavesdropping on a cult.

But Kudo knows that "futury" is a beautiful word, and when Reiko brings in the chorus vocals, we just want more. Sadly it's all over in less than a minute and a half. Maher seem driven by an almost punk urgency to get finished and on to the next thing – no spaced out self-indulgence here. Much of the album is utopian, and most tracks are surprisingly short. "Highway", for example, crams an airful of lyrics into two minutes and enhances the jangling guitars with gritty dub effects on the fly. Maher may have their head in the clouds, but their feet are running across the desert.

Some songs – "Sunrise", "You Keep Saying In Your Heart" – have such potential that you regret Kudo didn't spend longer developing them (maybe expand the two line "Open Field", for example) and less time on the stream of more instrumentals that occupy much of the album's second half. But even here, the balance between childlike charm and flow of musical ideas is maintained to the end. So it's better to conclude that Kudo knows exactly what he is doing and that *Blues Du Jour* is an astonishing feat, a unique vision of pop in orbit, light years from the mainstream. □

age when LPs went 20 minutes per side and resisting a tendency to fill a disc to its 80-minute capacity just because you can. Condensing 13 tracks that don't outstay their welcome into 37 minutes, the Lemon Of Pink will leave nobody feeling short-changed.

BUCK 65 TALKIN' HONKY BLUES

WEA 504-485072 CD

BY DAVID SUEBES

Some say the mysterious Buck 65, whose beatnik, smoke-and-mirrors background is shrouded in myth and uncertainty, is a cross between Eminem and Tom Waits — a sort of high melodic, hip-hop take on the lives of the marginalized and dispossessed. But that glib formula doesn't do justice to *Talkin' Honky Blues* — not his debut album but the first to realize in musical fact, his wild, weathered vignettes of desperate lives hanging by a shoestring. This record needs the slouch of six-day old cabbage and wet cardboard. It feels like it was pieced together with bits salvaged from a landfill site or designed up from the nether. Yet it's one of the most exciting and life-affirming albums in a very long time.

Hip-hop is generally inimical to tales of the frontier, hand to mouth energy of street life, as if the indignity, the uselessness of it is too much to relate. Hence an emphasis on guns, smooches of hookers and fies, of champagne, U2s and meditations, the absolute denial of the impossible and pervasive poverty of life. Eminem was candid about his trailer trash background — like Buck 65, he's white and maybe such self-deprecation, poverty notwithstanding, is a badge of white privilege — yet even he was given to flying off into realms of self-aggrandizement, superpower fantasy when reality got too much.

Not Buck 65. He reconnects hip-hop with its bluesy, hobo, dirt-poor ancestry. His stories of hustling offer glimpses of hope and defiance but never descend into nihilist delusion. With lines like "I have no plans and nothing to prove either/ I eat out of bag and sleep in a move-in trailer. The highway's a different / just wait it out," his is a longshore of a different order.

Whether it's the bleak, descending series of "Raved" tales, the last recording of former girlfriends on "Eyes" accompanied on Jew's harp, the "povety ain't what I used to be" wistfulness of "4/13" or "Catharsism?" — whose narrator proudly notes the arcane art of a good shoeshine before bemoaning the rise of sneakers, cutting off his sole source of livelihood — this album creaks all over you, hitting and scorching with street poetry and endlessly evocative backbeats and instrumentation. Ragged shreds move alongside known stories of pedal steel and rhythm, fidget impatiently between manglewading acoustic guitars as on "Tied Out." Yet this is anything but a track, down and out album. Rather it teems with the frantic energy it takes to hustle and survive when you're that close to joining the slumped drunks who "don't die, they evaporate." I like art made of garbage," muses Buck 65 on "50 Gallon Drum." And this is art.

HAROLD BUDD LA BELLA VISTA

SHOUT FACTORY 0K 30233 CD

BY RICHARD HENDERSON

Perhaps the appearance of La Bella Vista signals a change in the zeitgeist, as once again

tables shift from raccoons staid craft to unadorned recordings. Or it could simply be another instance of being forever to get around to an obviously good idea, strip away all the digital maseins and support maseins that have coloured his wireless projects over the past 25 years and simply let Harold Budd play piano. Here longtime Budd cohort Daniel Lanois exultates in his triumphs set in the producer's Los Angeles living room on a 500-year-old Steinway. It is so good, Lanois has helped guide this quintessentially Californian composer book to the essence of his ongoing endeavour.

These solo performances, rife with references to Erik Satie, resemble the sets that Budd played in the late 70s at New York's Mudd Club: the tempo of a given selection is deceptively pacific, with strategically placed blue notes ruffling the calm, creating still more examples of what Budd has defined as "silver clouds with dark lining." Throughout pieces such as "Il Leopardo Della Nera", he builds to unresolved chords, then resumes his wordless narratives much as director Alfred Hitchcock once deployed, then discarded McGuffin's glimmers early in his films.

There are no traces here of Budd the beat poet or the fan of abstract expressionism, 50s jazz and cowboy music evoked by earlier albums. Ten examples of how quietly exciting truly Ambient can be — nothing more or less, at last.

CHARALAMBIDES UNKNOWN SPIN

KRANKY KRAMERIE CD

BY MARCUS BOON

For more than a decade Houston, Texas-based Charalambides have been perfecting their slow motion glissandos due into the void. Part of the burgeoning US free folk/psych underground, in recent years the group has embraced an increasingly minimalist approach, taking it far beyond the scene's mead of traditional, psychadelic and krautrock influences.

Last year's remarkable *IN CR 5E* (Edipress) saw the new cast of Olyvianna and Tom Casterling stretch out on four-chord organ and guitar-driven drone raga-rock pieces to devastating effect. But *Unknown Spin* builds on the ultra-minimalist guitar and voice pieces of another CD released last year, *Being As Is* (Causal Blast). A collection of live to tape improvisations made with new member Heather Leigh Murray and prominently featuring a pedal steel guitar, the recordings sound like Light or Silesia stuck in the back of a truck somewhere in Texas, with a Ry Cooder soundcheck playing on a damaged car radio. Carter and Murray's voices provide wordless, expressive music done at oblique pitches to the guitars, which, especially on the latter tracks, are glorious, raw and intimate. With no drums, there's a lot of space and silence between sounds, giving the CD a haunting, big sky feel.

At times there's a fitting, unfrilled quality to the improvisations and, at least in the first track, it would be good to hear further versions or tentacles of the theme. But here is a truly 21st century experimental ethnic music that explores quietness and stillness, and discovers new forms, practices and pleasures there, in the same way that musicians in the second half of the 20th century discovered amplification, noise and speed.

DEVORAH DAY LIGHT OF DAY

ABATON BOOK COMPANY ABATONCD 00

BY DAVID KEIRIAN

In the late 1990s, Devorah Day appeared out of nowhere on New York's downtown jazz scene. Her electric approach to vocals carved her a parallel space next to first generation fines like Patty Waters and Amy Shaffer, while maintaining a deep connection to the source with fearless assaults on standards like "Lower Me". Fittingly, given just how far outside the pocket Day is capable of navigating, she's now represented by Bernard Stollman of ESP-Disco, who first brought her to the attention of Lari Berté and Mark Dagley of Abaton Book Company as a possible complement to their releases by another singular female vocalist, Marianne Nowitzky.

Recorded at the tail end of 1999, *Light Of Day* boasts the triple horn section of Marianne Brown, Jorge Sylvester and the enigmatic and sadly under-documented free gospel reciter Bopcat II, alongside bassist David Coling and vocal instrumentalist Mel Lucky. The absence of drums slows down the group's momentum in the processing of ideas but allows them more ingenuitous access to the vertical, while Coling's bass generates just enough gravity to hold them in. At points, especially on her own compositions, Day's voice almost functions as a fourth horn, blowing the trio with sudden octave drops and scatty extrapolations, skirting the total terror with the kind of warm, natural phrasing of Lester Young.

The three saxophonists work as a tag team, running down through each other's lines and letting off volcanic galls behind Day's goods and starts. But it's her cover of "Lower Me", still bearing the bruises of Billie Holiday, that provides the most heartstopping moment here, with her idealizing vocal perfectly poised between emotion and reverence, myth and reality, ghosts and blood.

THE FALL THE REAL NEW FALL LP (FORMERLY COUNTRY ON THE CLICK)

ACTION TALK021 CD/LP

BY JOHN MURPHY

In this year's glut of Fall releases, compilations, crypto-official bootlegs and dubious ephemera, it may be easy to miss the arrival of an album of new material. The title *The Real New Fall LP* seems as much, but also alludes to its delayed release. Country On The Click was originally due in 2002, only to be delayed by Internet leaks, live-up reshuffles and endless reworking.

The finished track isn't conspicuously more crafted or obsessed over than usual. It is, though, one of Mark E. Smith's personal returns to form. Following 2001's almost slovenly *Are You Are Moving Winter*, *The Real New Fall LP* is a punchier effort, at least since it features "Theme From Sparta II", a snarly anthem for hostile football fans ("We live on blood") that is Smith's coldest song since 1999's "Touch Sensative".

Save the inevitably recognised personnel (Ben Fitchard on guitar, Dave Miner on drums, Jim Watts on piano and bass, the latter sacked in March), there's not much new here, of course. Acid keyboards gutter quietly, drums rumble halfway between funk rock and drugs, guitar riffs are largely gietta, sometimes springy, smug.

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Markus Schmickler reinvests post-rock with its original experimental brief on the best avant pop/noise record since *My Bloody Valentine's Isn't Anything*. By Rob Young

The charming man: Pluramon's Marcus Schmickler

PLURAMON
DREAMS TOP ROCK
KARAOKE KALK 92 CD

Charms Music Clerk, as Cologne-based Marcus Schmickler anagrammatises himself on the credits of this third Pluramon album, should not be so quick to hide his lights under a bushel. Pluramon has always been one of the more unpredictable and interesting projects to stem from the fertile jungle of sounds that has been bred in the future community of friends centred around Cologne's A-Musik and Song labels for the past 15 years or so. But this album, the first under the Pluramon banner since 1998's *Revolver Bandits* (not counting its remix version album *Bit Sand Riders*), is just about the best avant pop/noise record to emerge from the independent sector since *My Bloody Valentine's Isn't Anything*.

It's a startling reinvention for Schmickler, who has proved himself capable of holding his own in a wide variety of contexts. As a member of Kontakta – an improv collective from back in the early 90s who produced a lone recording that became Cologne's Rosetta stone – he's one of the charmed circle of experimental insiders who have infiltrated the city's underground scene over the years, including Song's Frank Dormert, Haigh, Mouse On Mars's Jan St Werner and, at one time, even a youthful Jim O'Rourke. Since then he has lasted the distance as one of music's triathletes, producing pure electroacoustic compositions under the name Wabi Sabi, minimal Techno for Thomas Brinkmann's Ernst Enghart, and laptop improvisation with the likes of Thomas Lehn and Minus. Pick Up Claydon, his first Pluramon LP for Mille Plateaux, briefly slipped in the pulsing pulsations of Can croonman Jaki Lieberzst. A more regular percussive partner has been young jazz

drummer Jochen Rueckert, who reappears here – although the drums are often a distant sonic pulsar behind a galaxy of crackling, digitally soaked-up guitars. This is a song album, but not like you've ever heard before: guest musicians include Keith Rowe, Felix Kubin and Kevin Drumm. There's nothing else quite like it right now, even though it sits neatly among the disparate canons of units such as Animal Collective, Black Dice, Radam, Tarwater, Dean Roberts, et al: post-rock (roque?) outfits in the original, intended sense of augmenting instrumental line-ups with technologies and practices foreign to the Stones-Pistols-Nirvana bloodline. But Schmickler has a trump card to play – the female voice who has chosen to breathe life into his intended song album. It is the cottonlined, featherstroked larynx of Ms Julie Cruise.

David Lynch's favourite vocalist is all over this record, sharing some of the writing and composing credits, and her tuned breath – rather than the vibration of vocal cords – so suited to the mini-metamorphosis of her floating into *The Night* album of 1989, and which is so well suited to Lynch's phantasmic cinema, is an ideal partner for Schmickler. Pluramon music is itself a metafiction, a fictive version of pop reconstructed from a hard disk loaded with samples of real time actions, rifts wamped on guitars, skins struck, wind piped through stopped wooden tubes.

"Time For A Lie" is a killer track, appearing in two versions. It opens the record with stratospheric confidence, and later winds it down in a seasonal haze. Cruise plays the smiler with a knife. "It's a wonderful time in our lives/The people stare and wish they were us," sings a mouth stuffed with marshmallows, before the switchblade is flicked: "They'll never know that there's no trust/And everything is all fucked up/It's a

beautiful time for a lie..." (None of your Celine Dion frou-frou foxes here.) Curiously, at the coda Schmickler can be heard picking out the notes of "Be Near Me" by ABC – another group with a profound self-consciousness about the song, though more repulsively exhibited. On "Ragdoll", Rueckert sweeps with the brushes while Hayden Chisholm's dancier scrubs away at the gently yewing acoustic jazz flow. "Have You Seen Jill" is a lament for one already dispersed, in a honeyed vocal spooned down from the celestity.

Far from being merely a showcase foregrounding, Cruise's remarkable talents, her placing deep inside Schmickler's lush stereo mix has the air of a rare, shy creature in a zoo shambling about in the dark shadows at the back of the cage. You could even see these songs as constructions like the ominous cabinets of artist Joseph Cornell: four-square containers filled with mysterious, wonderful figures and trinkets, but the more you try to gaze inside, the more you begin to see little mirrors, embossed partitions and compartments or layers of scenery that obstruct and confuse. "Hello Shadow" and "Log" are almost too obviously patches of the ripe autumnal guitar bleedings of MBV, the latter finding a ravishing way of marrying a Kevin Shields-like comet trail to a groove straight off one of Sandy Denny's folktraps. And few apart from Schmickler could put call-centre robovox over the symphonic, slide guitar slowdance of "Difference Machine" and get away with it.

Songs that have no truck with sentimental mush, that can still cut to the quick: pop/noise composers dourly pecked with intrigue and clouded by the fog of emotional warfare: it's time for this charming music clerk to have his day. □

hangs over the dining desk; firing industries grind their way to an unhappy conclusion somewhere in the background. The copiousity of each season's new recruits to subjugate all musical idiosyncrasies to the time-honoured Falsethistic consists a muscle of sorts.

But they have inspired their taskmaster into one of his relatively lucid, enthusiastic moods. Smith is higher in the mix than usual, railing unambiguously at selected enemies ("I hate the country set so much," he admits, possibly unnecessarily, on "Contraflow") and hardly ever resorting to the garbled rockabilly he turns to in moments of artistic disorientation.

Instead, most of *The Best New Fall LP* presents this ever-changing, always the same institution at its best as an ominous, baroque garage band, most reminiscent of their mid-80s heyday "Protest!protest!", especially in terrific juxtaposing Smith's notably angry trade with — a minor innovation, this — looming, churchy harmonies. "Does everybody talk about the same thing all the time?" he scowls, an inexhaustible scourge of conformity who appears ignorant of his own hilarious genius gifts for repetition and predictability. A real good Fall album, then. Expect another, the one after next.

JB FLOYD
TRANSPORTING
TRANSMITTANCE: MUSIC OF JB
FLOYD

DE HUMANCITY

In 1975 on extraordinary concert at Northern Illinois University by pianists David Rosenbaum and JB Floyd was recorded and issued by ARC Records as *Suitable for Framing*. Since then, Rosenbaum's reputation has been consolidated, both as a composer of major work such as the computer music epic *Systems of Judgement* (*Centaur*) and as an improviser, as on *Two Lives* (Lucky). His duet with saxophonist Anthony Braxton, but Floyd's profile has been low, making his new CD a welcome surprise.

In recent years Floyd has been investigating the potential of the Disklavier digital piano, used on all seven pieces here. A Transposing Transmitter For Transverse Flute And Disklavier is performed with flautist Lisa Hansen, who skillfully tracks a convoluted line, while the keyboard follows a slender complementary harmonic path. On *Pam - A Ruminated Little 3-O' Pictures*, Floyd is joined by baritone vocalist Thomas Buckner for its trilogy of settings of poems by Oakland San Daniel Moore. Inaugural in the mid 1980s of the legendary madrigal group, Floating Lotus Music Opens Company, Buckner has since moved to Berkeley. The Disklavier again provides harmonic enhancement, while Buckner brings customary clarity and ardour to his interpretation.

Improvisations On Robert Ashley's *et/Alfonso* for Delaware and E-Mu Sampler adapts two sections from Ashley's fabulous espionage and interrogation opera. The adaptation was made from its initial scoring for voice and doobie piano accompaniment, preserving its mysterious mood in sonic shadows that hang in the air around Floyd's sensitive melodic improvising. On *Solos And Sequences II*, a high energy, neo-Baroque, boogie woogie extravaganza, Floyd pays homage to boogie greats Pete Johnson and Albert Ammons, with an

interlude that replicates prepared piano sonnettes. This varied sample of Floyd whets the appetite for more, and missing *Sustable For Fanning* would make a fine start.

JONNY GREENWOOD
BODYSONG

E.M. BOOTH CO.

BY DAVID STUBBS

This is the soundtrack by **Richard Dattner** for **Johnny Greenwood's** a unique film directed by **Simon Purnell**. It traces the journey from birth to death by splicing together a collage of moving images culled from the last 100 years, including home movies, old Philby bulletins and research institute footage. What could have been a rather lifeless dramatic proposal is actually a moving, amusing and shocking one, mainly because of the sheer range, impact and originality of the found footage. Greenwood's soundtrack, too, plays its part. Clearly drawing on his intimate acquaintance with the music of this and the last century, he lends the project a due range and a certain merciless ambience.

If anything, the soundtrack works better in isolation, evoking a new set of abstract mental images of its own, in conjunction with an unavoidable glare of 'spot the influence'. The opening "Neon Tide" is simple but effective, with its plodding piano and sustained string wobble hinting at a distant, futuristic world. "Bode Radio" / "Glass Light/Broken Hearts" is like an imaginary rising passage from one of Bartók's early string quartets. On "Goodness In Soldiers", radio-phonic effects give way to the distressed, toy-like in the atmospheric of early Pink Floyd, while "Convergence" demonstrates an understated facility with the methods of Steve Reich.

On "Splitter," Greenwood plays eloquent and oblique homage to the pioneers of free jazz—imagine the ghosts of Sun Ra's Arkestra rumbling into action, culminating in a John Gilmore-style burst of brilliant, tortuous sax (here, courtesy of Julian Argüelles). "Miley Drops From Heaven" revisits similar terrain—imagine the Art Ensemble Of Chicago rushing down a cosmic plughole. Only on "24 Hour Charleston," so you remember that Jerry Greenwood is, like, a rock distant dude.

Soaked in sombre string bane, the closing "Tehellat" encapsulates the mood of *Body Song*, the film, with its exquisitely awful cycle of life, strife and death. Although Greenwood has essentially provided a patchwork quilt of established styles here, his ear for what connects, honed through working with a multimillion-selling group, tells it beautifully tonight.

GUILTY CONNECTOR UND TABATA

GUILTY CONN

TABATA

This collaboration between Gully Connector (aka Kohji 'The Fast' Nakagawa) and Zim Gosa guitarist Mitsuru Tabata is an intriguing mix of the governing musical instincts of current Japanese guitar acts. Gully Connector favors noise over all else, while Tabata is more schooled in Eastern psych. These recordings meld both approaches in a manner likely to please fans of the heavier end of Japanese rock rock.

Tabata's Prog guitar colourings dominate a track like "Le Schisme Existence Anonyme", where

Quality Connector accompanies an electronics and his furiously expressionistic approach to symbols. This sense of playing as much against each other as with each other, of colliding rather than collaborating, marks out pieces like "Load Possession" and "The Bug Leg." However, the method can fail, as on "Noise Goes The Weasel", a throwaway duet for toy music boxes that appears to feature two separate, but equally tedious, performances in each channel. Thankfully, it's the album's solitary oddity.

The highlight is the opening "The Dawn/All In This", featuring that most misunderstood of instruments, the theremin. For those who feel it deserves a better reputation than being the tinkling man's Swanee whistle, Guilty Conductor and Tabata prove it can produce something other than good vibrations. The theremin itself is a fitting metaphor for this collaboration, being at once easily disembodyed and ethereal, yet needing the corporeal presence of the artist to produce sound. Likewise, these recordings ground Tabata's cerebral psych tendencies with Guilty Conductor's worldly and brutal heaviness.

LOU HARRISON
WORKS: 1939-2000

MODE 1:23 CD

DRUMS ALONG THE PACIFIC

NEW ALBION NA122 CI

SERENADO

NEW ALBION NA155 CO

BY BRIAN MORTON

Like Morrison's sudden death in February en route to a music festival in Ohio was like a bridge coming down. Amid so much pseudo-multiculturalism, Morrison sought to make a common language of European and Asian traditions, and to heal a deep rift, visible even in American vernacular music, between high art and popular idioms. Though he remained committed to the internationalist and democratic ideals of L. Zamenhof's *do* language – titles like *El Amo Suro* and *Serenado here* – he never wrote in a bland musical Esperanto, but in a vigorous and muscular style that transcended national styles by refusing to concede that they were a problem.

The earliest work contained here is a premiere recording of the original version of Harrison's 1939 *Mass For St Anthony*, written in response to the Nazi invasion of Poland and scored for choros and orchestra. Snarcs, bass and brake drums in the Kyrie suggest the onslaught of the German army, while the Gloria is packed with as many bell sounds as Harrison could muster. Similar instrumentation also appears on *Gwyns Along The Pacific*. William Winant plays the 1972 *Solo For Anthony* (Grove on tenor bells, and Winant's ensemble perform three pieces which make just a little biter than the mass. *Sanctus #13* and *Song Of Quetzalcoatl* (1941), and *Rapture And Ecstasy* #3 from the following year.

What is immediately evident from these works is that Hartman is no naive backwoodsman but a composer with a formidable grasp of musical history. Such an awareness was almost demanded on the first piece on the Medo set, a new incidental score to Jean Cocteau's surrealist masterpiece *Marriage At The Eiffel Tower*. This had originally been scored in Paris by the members of Les Six (including Gertrude Seikaly, who had also migrated to California), and later for Bonnie Bird by a consortium of Americans, including George



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[what is this and what are these?]

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and some rather lovely X-mas.

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~ & ~

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and other thingsthese extracts compiled by
one person at one time
and several locations
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second set released thursday 4th march
james & soo hand-numbered copies
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McKay, Henry Cowell and John Cage. In 1949, as his music simplified and became more naturally melodic, Harrison was asked to score Bart's revival at Reed College, a still larger orchestral version is well known, but here we have the delightful original septet score, with narration.

Also from 1949 is a score for tenor's dance play *The Only Jealousy of Emily*, a tripping, rippling piece for flute, oboe, bass, tack piano and celesta which strongly anticipates the gamelan inspired intransigent style of later years. The Model set also includes songs from a radio version of Eugene O'Neill's *Lazarus*. Laughed and new arias for Harrison's own young Caesar, a puppet opera written in 1971 and then problematically rewritten in 1988 for the Portland Gay Men's Chorus. Harrison returned to the work almost to the end of his life, seemingly fascinated by Caesar's youthful fight with Nomenclature of Berytus, but also troubled by the poor reception his opera received.

Serenade stands somewhat apart from the other two discs, first of all in that it is devoted to guitar compositions and transcriptions, and secondly in that some of the material has been released previously (such as *The Perilous Chapel* on New Albany). Though Whelan's occasional contributions offer a point of continuity with the other albums, this is very much a David Torranceband record. Its earliest piece is *Serenade For Gitarro* from 1952, not to be confused with the five movement *Serenade*, also included. Like the first of these, other works on *Serenade* were originally written for tape or piano, often as personal tributes to friends or loved ones, harpist Beverly Bellows, dancer Tandy Seel, the 50 year old Ljovad Stokviski and Harrison's longtime companion and collaborator Bill Cough, who died in 2000.

And yet behind all of these works, and the people they celebrated, was an ongoing search for new ways to play modes and scales, and blend them with fresh sonorities. Harrison experienced a fast of memory when Torranceband brought him a National Steel guitar. It immediately captured up all attention, leading to Harrison's travels on the radio while his mother played mal-jong, and not long before his death he wrote three pieces for Torranceband, inspired by the sculptures of Noh Chandi, near Chandigarh, India. The guitarist premiered "The Leaning Lady", "The Rock Garden" and "The Sinuous Arcade With Sticks In The Arches" in 2002, using a borrowed instrument in equal temperament. He plays it here with a modified fretboard. Rich and resonant, it's the climax of the album, suggesting that however familiar his usual working vocabulary had become, Harrison was capable of surprising right up to the end.

HANS JOACHIM IRLMER
LIFELIKE
STUDIO GOLD 44 CD
BY KITH MOLINE

Unbelievably, this is the first solo album by any member of that most mysterious and mythical of 70s German groups, Faust. Dream and sound both Hans Joachim Irmeler was a key member of both the original line-up and the version that continues to produce challenging work since they reformatted at the start of the 90s.

Possibly due to their engendering the kind of mystique that often surrounds apparently closed communities with their secret, arcane practices,

Faust members have never had the prominence of, say, the individuals of contemporaries Can. It is no surprise that Irmeler presents this album as a "biography in sound" rather than an autobiography, discouraging overt, literal interpretation while still suggesting an overarching narrative to the abstract scores. On disc, they passably more emotionally resonant than in the music, the original use as a museum soundtrack for an exhibition on the life of Roman soldiers in Central Europe 2000 years ago.

In any case, Irmeler's music is simply too massive to serve as an illustration of the life of a mere human being. The opening "Electroblast" sets out his self immediately with its seismic rumbles and explosions, the sound not of a child being born but rather a whole planet coalescing from unstable clouds of cosmic gas. On "Impulse", his low drone is enlivened with the resolute of aeons, ancient, all but fossilised. "The Actor's Game" is similarly redolent of natural phenomena, a post-Age show. His still lies in the way he can suggest literally earth-shattering events without recourse to alienating or melodramatic noise strategies, perhaps because of the essential warmth of the organ as an instrument, which radiates though even his most abstract treatments.

Even on the more fragmentary and abrasive later pieces such as "Eis", whose combination of factory hum and metallic radio voices suggests a landscape of giant antennas speaking to one another, Irmeler's work has a kind of majestical, ambiguous beauty. The first piece "Welt" is a suspense time, transporting the listener through a white hot tunnel, which finally emerges into a special Eden of glowing tones, or post-Alienation emptiness illuminated faintly by flickering radioactive debris.

I TRINI INERTI

URA

CREATIVE SOURCES CUBE CD
BY DAN WATSON/URTH

British trumpeter Mark Davis has been less visible in recent years than his American A.D. Donner and America's Greg Kelly, but his contribution to the world of extended trumpet technique is just as deserving of attention, even if his solo CD *Trini Mute Correspondences* (Conforti) is long out of print. In a letter to *The Wire* 23, Davis provided some valuable insights into his aesthetic stance, particularly his attitude to expressivity, and Ura gives listeners the chance to bear them in practice. The trio I Trini Inerti finds him in company of second trumpeter Rüdiger Barben and accordionist Alberto Costa Martini, both based in Barcelona. Martini also displays his prepared guitar work with Fennan Pajares in *Interludes*.

A certainough given to Ura's sound has a strong affinity with the electronic medium. As Davis writes in a rather austere manifesto, the music of I Trini Inerti exists in "continuous movement between audible and inaudible, intimate and shared, silence and presence, stillness and change — as the palindromic the this has chosen as its name suggests". Their painstaking exploration of every potential use of their instruments as sound sources is such that 'normal' trumpet and accordion sounds, as the mix occurs they actually appear, come over positively surrealistic. Silence plays a fundamental structural role throughout, a concern for sustained serenity and a density of

texture clearly differentiates the resulting music from the 'loops you missed' if school of Japanese lowercase Impass. As architecturally rigorous as the metal gratuity on the album cover, the music is fragile and delicate without being intricate.

JAZZ COMPOSERS ALLIANCE
ORCHESTRA
IN THRU, AND OUT
CANDICE JAZZ CLUB CD
BY BEN WATSON

Based in Boston and funded by various Massachusetts cultural bodies, the Jazz Composers Alliance Orchestra packs musical history in its name. Jazz is of course the 20th century genre that found axes for improvisation expanded by classical and pop. A commercial affair, no one cared whether jazz was composed, arranged or improvised by diners in party kits. The concept of Jazz Composers arrived with aspiration to art status. In 1953, Charles Mingus founded the Jazz Composers Workshop, in 1964, Bill Dixon founded the Jazz Composers Guild; and in 1968, Carla Bley and Mike Mantler founded the Jazz Composer's Orchestra Association and released stunning, turbulent records featuring Cecil Taylor. By the time you've got to that point, you can only return to 'jazz' forms with your tongue firmly in your cheek — a focal contention which seems to define here.

The 18 orchestra members are skilled and highly disciplined, but unfortunately most of the time it's this which is what we're appreciating, rather than anything original or musically pertinent. David Harris's opener resembles klezmeristic post-soul textures, but remains inconsequential and pretty damn kitsch while cheerily compresses of swing, film music's various percussion Klezmer (Warren Sordani's "Bats") and Japanese folk-song (Laura Ande's "Caravan") appear with the inevitability of a black face — in a subordinate role — in a Hollywood film. It's all recorded with astonishing clarity. Nevertheless, the clarity becomes banal, like photos taken with cameras whose shutter chaps and flashlights are out like and mark and over exposure. Compensatory, nothing personal is risked, and after a while the ubiquitous 'quality' becomes an oppressive anonymity. No one can improve a good solo over the wondrous "pal-dad" of film-score minimalist Karla ("Red Blue"). The origin blues of Irmeler's "lively" sounds like chaos from a West End musical.

Music signifies in its cell structure, which is rhythm. Here, whatever recesses fills are based on the superstructure of the music by the composers. The Alliance Orchestra's best pulse is prime and prissy, correct and sterile, not rich and rebellious. Without the metric contradiction which has variously been described as blues, swing, funk, rag and Impass, the music becomes a ludicrous simulacrum, like watching Steve Martland try and write *The Rite Of Spring*, or Mary Poppins breakdown.

KHANATE

THUNDERBOLT DUNSTON CD
BY PHIL FREEDMAN

The four tracks on *Khanate's* second CD, *Thinge Vail*, redefine Dunst as a genre into itself rather than a branch of Metal. There is no point at which *Khanate's* music rocks. When it's not simply feeding back, Stephen O'Malley's guitar, other

than snoring and moaning, tells like a cathedral bell. Bassist James Pickin drones and throbs. The drums, played by Tim Woychik from Blind Idiot God (a joap thought long defunct) are spaced much too far apart to cause anything like a rhythm. Had the Michael Gira of 1984-era Swans heard Kharate, even he'd have screamed at them to get on with it. Kharate are so slow, an ideal test project could be an arrangement of Martin Fitelbaum's *String Quartet No. 2*. The problem is, vocalist Alan Rubin's screech is rooted in punk, not death. He doesn't sing his lines so much as scream them. On opening track "Committed," he sounds like Fears Def Scorch howling out his alienade. With two tracks nearing 20 minutes, and the others running to roughly ten apiece, the album's oppressive Long March slowness — not to mention Rubin's pining voice — makes it an endurance test for many listeners, even as it induces a compelling desire for some kind of resolution.

KRONOS QUARTET HARRY PARTCH: US HIGHBALL NONESUCH 7558949979 CD

PETERIS VASKS: STRING QUARTET NO. 4 NONESUCH 7558949992 CD

BY MARTIN LONGLEY

These are part of a new Nonesuch series of mini-albums, each featuring a single work roughly 30 minutes in length. Harry Partch created three versions of *US Highball*. The one here is a 1997 arrangement, based on Partch's 1943 tale for voice and three instruments, by Ben Johnston, who studied and worked with the composer as a young man. Battling an initial hesitancy, Kharate eventually persuaded Johnston to rewrite it for the quartet's conventional instrumentation. Partch composed this work in eight parts after hobnobbing from Carmel, California to Chicago in 1941 and keeping a notebook on the way. He scribbled narrative because he's instinctively linked to the music's descriptive properties, such as emulating the motion of riding freight trains. Krones sweep across the music with the misadventures of a picknick, gliding, sneering and bending as they follow narrator David Berne's wildly varying and unpredictable speech patterns. As a classically trained singer, shaded with a pompous, operatic diction, Rubin's contribution is problematic. His formality is completely at odds with Partch's text. A folky, untutored voice would have made a better channel for this bawdy odyssey.

With his somber and linear progress from offense seamy through to troubled agitation, Latvian composer Peteris Vasks's string quartet is a complete contrast. Commissioned by Kronos in 1999, its dark, doomy vistas are the Right-based Vasks's response to strife-filled times. Nevertheless the piece acknowledges the human capacity to live through such trials. Vasks dedicates the work to his mother, uplifting elements of Latvian folk songs. The key embellishments of his starting "Ugry" rise out of its singing sustain, unceasingly invoking Arvo Pärt. "Tocata II" gathers percussive momentum from the quartet's pining strikes and hummed strokes; "Chrono" ascends on persistently unending and sensuously vibrating long lines; the final "Meditation" returns the work to a weeping stasis. More attuned to the composer's intentions, Kharate's reading is extremely sensitive.

ILHAN MIMAROGU & FREDDIE HUBBARD SING ME A SONG OF SONGMY ATLANTIC MASTERS 0122736509 CD

BY BEN WATSON

Born in Istanbul in 1928, son of a famous architect, Ilhan Mimaroglu was a Rockefeller scholar and emigrated to the States in 1959. He studied at the Columbia-Riverside Electronic Music Center, using their state-of-the-art synthesizer to make garishly active tape pieces. A jazz fan, his work was characterized by a most unStockhausen-like sense of humor. Atlantic Records was then run by the Litvin brothers, sons of the Turkish ambassador, and Mimaroglu did production work for them in 1971. He and leading hard bop/free jazz trumpeter Freddie Hubbard collaborated on a major project, a protest against the Vietnam War. As Kwan Lee Gendie points out in his sleevelet, after massive global protests on 15 February 2002 against the US/UK attack on Iraq, the album has renewed relevance.

In terms of packaging, this release is disappointing. The original LP came in a gatefold sleeve, with a striking collage of photos and quotations in the innerfold. These have been crammed into a single square, obliterating most of the quotes. A pale reproduction of the cover reduces the impact of Picasso's anti-war painting *Massacre in Korea*. Lee Gendie's sleevelet is impenetrable and lazily researched the killing of four protesters at Kent State University happened on 4 May 1970, not "in the late 60s." He makes the obligatory reference to *Appalachian Now*, as if only Hollywood conforms neatly on US foreign policy, while his phrases plumb the depths of cliché: "What we have here is a representation of a tragedy, that of 'man's inhumanity to man'," to quote Roberto Fluck. It is the human case at ground zero, a sobering voyage to the heart of darkness. "This is copy by someone who can't tell what's going on in the record at all. Flows journalistically, distorting the whole point of anti-war statements, which must be specific and courageous: why one mutinying soldier is more important than 1000 poems for 'peace'."

By 1971, the most powerful musical protests against the Vietnam War had been made. By their very existence, 60s free jazz and underground rock were anti-war organic expressions of a social movement. In his abstract pieces, Mimaroglu's sense of drama works for him; on *Songmy*, he and his reciters are overwhelmed by the subject. It seems choose logic which exceed the scope of their verbal powers, the results make you get your teeth (Lee Gendie appears to confuse such embarrassment with a "poverty" emotional charge). Here stately pronouncements about violence set the scene, reducing the music to farcical illustration: Columbia-Picotee wootches and buzzes sound silly indeed attempting to describe the horrors of carpet bombing and napalm. When Hubbard and band come in, they're playing subdued hard bop, which can't relate to the surrounding night theatre at all. The screaming melody of US atrocity produces the more ludicrous over-argument: "You're left with a series of bald effects, like a suite by Erik Satie or Supersatist. Despite Wagner's subjugation of music to

drama, conveying modern music requires an immense logic."

The quotations Mimaroglu chose for the innerfold — Gustav Mahler, Arthur Koestler, Joseph Warton, Charles Ives — bristle with composer's individualism. On the record, the poets release the helplessness before history's chaoticness of religious question, except for the moment when Freddie Hubbard reads Paul Dagon's poem to a Black Soldier. Suddenly the force that can stop wars and overturn American society is revealed. Yet Mimaroglu betrays the collective and populist character of black music, writing over his score: "The independent voices of the individual — the jazz group — pitted against the multitude." Such individualist hand writing is especially inappropriate here. The Vietnam War was eventually won by an insurgency population in the victim country and stopped by mass opposition in the aggressor. For some inexplicable reason, *Sing Me A Song Of Songmy* begins with "Beneath For Sharon Tate," as if the fact that Charles Manson had long hair proved that everyone in American society was equally guilty. The crime of the Vietnam War constitutes such an indictment of the public rationality of modern society that it cannot be dealt with by theatrical means. We need Coltrane and Herd, musicians who worked on the very syntax of our sense of self, not some consolatory requiem which says that if we're humble enough, the bad men will go away — a strategy that hasn't worked as far.

MOVIEZONE THE SAND AND THE STARS DOMINO WCCD011 CD

BY MA CLAUKE

Prompted by a review of *Moviezone's* second album, *The Blossom Field Streets* (2000), which described their sound as like "a jazz record being played from across the bay", the Bristol-based duo determined to make their third record just so. *The Sand And The Stars* was partially recorded on a serviced beach, tucked under a cliff in the most south-western corner of England, Land's End. Here, Kate Wright and Rachel Coe rented a small cottage overlooking the bay, and surrounded themselves with friends and musicians, acoustic instruments (even managing to drag a double bass down the rock face) and two microphones.

Much of the work was completed as the sun drew in, with the field recordings of late afternoon seagulls, recent products and radio producer Alan Lorne serving as a specific inspiration. The results are organic and free flowing, determined by the personalities of nature — are the birds' voices too loud? Will it rain tonight? — rather than the studio's technical demands. Though the songs are structurally concerned, the location's sense of space infuses the sound, while encouraging the duo to let notes sound their natural timbre.

"Beach Samba" is as fresh as it is understated, with waves languidly beating out their own rhythm next to the drums, and Wright's vocals weaving between staccato trumpet and clarinet. Recorded on a cliff pan next a steep gully, "The Blossom Field Streets" brings the album to a quiet end with a key swelling with hungry seagulls, their cackles echoing sadly above Wright's short solo, which pulses with images of wriggly rocks beneath a bright sky.

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NETTLE FIRECAMP STUDIOS REMIXES

FIRECAMP STUDIOS AUDIO11 CD

BY PETER SHARGO

Tactile, engaged and political, Nettle's *Build A Fire*, Set That On Fire was one of last year's most under appreciated albums. As is often (always?) the case with such endeavors, this kind of remixes and complete re-constructions sounds too much like lesser artists paddy-basking on the ideas of someone better. Nettle is DJ /rupture (aka Jose Clayton) and DD, a duo based in Spain who predated — apologies to DJane MC, Sofi Boys, et al — the current Overblast fad by a year or so. But where Dr. One, Lesky and Timberland merely fetishize, Nettle grapple with the implications of their samples.

Nettle's music is shy and elusive — Clayton's a police of texture rather than propaganda. Too many of the tracks here take one of two opposite sides: they are either too declaratory and obvious (Lackluster John, Timberland, Nettle), or too diffident, they scuffle off to hide in the corner (Mjando & Aeon, Joseph Nothing, I/O, Timberland again). Then, of course, there are the inevitable state digidub tracks, this one from Cam & DJ Shrey The Goodman.

Unsurprisingly the best tracks come from Nettle or /rupture himself: /rupture and Jesse Jones's mix is /rupture's art in miniature, a simultaneously rambling and concise blend of truncated strings, River Flow caught in a centrifuge, tortoise feedback doing donuts in the strum of Hodge Sophia and a perfect bubble drum-mid-meld of a sag or bendir and a Hiphop head-nodder. Nettle leaving Axi Amadi is perhaps less successful, sounding like a reprocessing job, with some disco here and dancehall-style rhythm struts there, on a live recording of a grava-jazz fusion. One-Max's effort is an endearingly fuzzy Neo606-style car-cash reminiscence, perhaps, of an Arabic taxi-cash trying to play in a bouzouki castle, while Mehmet told warlike in pleasing digital textures. But Hyeble almost steals the show with a rhythmic rap de luxe that tries to make connections between the hebling, spasmodic glitch beats so beloved of the crowd and the swelling geographies of Middle Eastern drumming.

Curiously missing in editor: DJ Sca's devastating remix of "Duende"

NURSE WITH WOUND SOLILOQUY FOR LIUTH

WOUND SPRINT 15MS124 3CD3

BY BOB YOUNG

This record was produced on the ausp of a major transition for Steven Stapleton and his partner Diana Rogerson. In 1989 Stapleton was working out the notice he'd given to quit his day job at a Central London engineers. In a cloud of unknowing over whether he could make a living from music making, he and Rogerson set up a record label, Idle Hole. *Soliloquy For Liuth*, recorded in 1988, was his first release, when it was originally entitled to the couple. With this 'Special Edition' (director's cut?), it has been reinserted into the ever expanding Nurse With Wound canon. As David Keenan observes in his scintillating account of Nurse With Wound's history in England's Hidden Reverse, the release helped to lead the couple's move that year to the remote house in the west of Ireland where

they live to this day.

In that time they have populated the world with various offspring, the first of whom is called Liuth. Stapleton has often made rhetorical gestures dedicated to women in his life: another record was called *Hymnbook To Maria*. These are grey meditations, piously numinous over pedestrianly set up effects abated to the slightest natural disturbance of the air above them. One imagines Stapleton and Rogerson, hunched over a scattering of electronic equipment, zoned out late at night, rocking back and forth while conjuring and coaxing these humming, fluctuating tones.

Almost no documentation here — and the fiesty artwork created for the original CD issue has been scaled. The present remastered incarnation of the record looks more like an electronic music LP from the early 70s, with variations on a series of concentric circles like vinyl grooves, which itself are subjected to milking, distorting mathematical treatments. It's kind of aspenetral, and the music's element can be summed up as a basic premise, randomly arrived at by judicious conjunctions of FX pedals, which are then slowly altered by Stapleton and Rogerson's preadglomerations. There are also no track titles — this soliloquy is one long modularizing monologue that remains largely in the same mood register. But track two on CD two is one to watch, here gentle tidal surges ebb around upper-register anharmonic whistlings that could be the distant call of swans beckoning the unworried traveler to their ecstatic dance. As this year's incredible Salt Lake Colosse proved, NWW achieves its finest peaks when evoking the shifting, eternal rhythms of the sea.

Where so much electronics fails to lift off from the base materials of its creation, whether digital DSP processors or generic attempts to replicate the clanky sounds of various pretopological sound workshops, *Soliloquy For Liuth*, 15 years on, has a glaucous strangeness, a sensuous feeling of determinedly slow floating, and a disarming enveloping inevitability that marks it out as the work of a genuinely psychedelic artistic union.

ANTHONY PATERAS & ROBIN FOX COAGULATE

SYNTHESIS/ISSA SYNACT CD

BY PHILIP CLARKE

Australian New Music has had a few genuinely maverick talents in the past — names like Keith Humble, Graham Hare and John Sangster — but the rise of the Synthesist label really represents the most convincing and coherent strain of antipodean experimental thought. Anthony Pateras's previous *Synthesist* albums, *Melankton* (Syndes) (reviewed in The Wire 229) showed a young composer unafraid to twist and mash expectations of acoustic instruments through works for ensembles and instrumental duos. It blended alienated shards of percussion with the sound of vacuum cleaners in an unusually well judged and fresh hybrid.

Joring forces with Melbourne electronic sound artist Robin Fox, Pateras transfixes this technically robust score with his electronic. Apparently the sound sources here include feedback, discarded piano hammers, ingested microphones and obsolete synthesizers. Throughout they let

their material find its point and then move on before a good thing becomes too much. In "44 Degree Spinters", Pateras and Fox work on the frame and wood of pianos, retaining a piano-like atmosphere but without a white or black key being sounded. The recording has extraordinary depth, and its stream of consciousness tries like a robot prepared piano. "Oursky The Dwarf" turns feedback into a similarly intense study. The usual acid tones are certainly present, but at a climactic point they're accelerated and transformed into a jolly cartoon voice. The disc reaches a lull and forlorn sonic peak with the postmarital "Circuits & Glass" before coming back to earth with delicate waves of scolded feedback in "Recombinant".

LUCTOR PONSE ELECTRONIC AND INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC: HISTORICAL RECORDINGS

CD DICI 000141 2CD2

BY PHILIP CLARKE

It's said that some composers are only as good as the last piece they heard. The history of modern composition is littered with figures like Luctor Ponce (1914-98), who wrote music echoing the major compositional movements of the 20th century that did just enough to be interesting. Born in Geneva of Franco-Dutch parentage, Ponce had a career that broadly followed the European modern classical mainstream. His two CD retrospective begins with the pique neoclassicism of the *Dee Ponce* for wind quartet (1943) before chronologically arriving at the mid stylistic part of call, the ether and 12 tone ensemble piece *Estrange* (1964). Subsequently he hit on a more personal language as he experimented with electronics and discovered that mixing and matching styles within the same piece could create a fruitful compositional dialectic.

His interest in electronics came from studying with Stockhausen and Boulez in Darmstadt in the early 60s. His CD retrospective begins with his electronic work *Nacht* (1964) in an accomplished if unmemorable product of this era. More engaging is the stylistic clash he provokes between piano and electronic tape in *Concerts I* (1967). Audibly bandaging the piano to the charmless monochrome textual writing characteristic of much post-Darmstadt music, he instead recognizes that it is ultimately a harmonic instrument, and his playful figurations, sounding like fractured Brahms or Chopin, provide a highly universal foreground for the heavily abstracted sound emerging from the loudspeakers. This kind of polyphonic is writ large in the notable *Second Voice* Concerto (1965). If it's modelled on Alban Berg's *Violin Concerto*, Ponce gladly contramimes the aesthetic purity of its post-salutary language with hints of Shostakovich-like burlesque and blithe orchestration that border on the crude. Judging by the audience's response here, the piece was designed to please.

By Pöpyäse IV (1994) for wind and percussion ensemble, Ponce has indeed classicalised his band with style to his solitary little to come in a clunker Leonard Bernstein. Bringing the set full circle, its rapid haddock proves that learning styles by rote only gets you so far.

STEVE RODEN
SPEAK NO MORE ABOUT THE
LEAVES

BTBR 2005 CD

STEVE RODEN/TU M'
BROKEN, DISTANT, FRAGRANT.

RO558/RO572 CD

Speak No More About The Leaves was inspired by the experimental poetry of Stefan George, as used in Arnold Schoenberg's *The Book Of The Hanging Gardens*. Steve Roden deconstructed George's poem into syllables and placed them in palindromic alphabetical order and sings the resulting text, printed on the CD itself, in a delicate falsetto (as well as sped up many times to produce a shimmering high register rattle) to form the basis of "aria"; it later reappears in a second version accompanied by labyrinthine samples of the original Schoenberg song cycle.

In the central title track, which Roden has also presented as a separate sound installation, the text is used as a score performed on a set of chimes. The same intimacy and quiet intensity are in evidence on broken, distant, fragrant, a collaboration between Roden and Italian laptopists Emilio Ronnelli and Rosano Poldino, aka Tu M' (see *The Wire* 234) where each sent the others source material to transform "On details and ornaments" and "flowers down", nocturnal noises and asymmetrical loops are wrapped in thick clouds of warm hum drifting across the stereo space, while "faustlike" recalls Pop Invoked, the gentle, reverent French notes Fermes' minimalism of last year's *Tu M' on Fall*.

Finally on the somber "paper bridges and small soft buildings" Roden's vocalizations reveal the darker anxieties of his George settings.

PHAROAH SANDERS
LIVE AT THE EAST

UNIVERSAL 9616 CD

BY PHIL FREDMAN

Pharoah Sanders' enduring reputation as a fire-breathing maverick of the saxophone often seems unquenchable. In fact, he had some exclusive moments when working alongside John Coltrane on albums like *Meditations* and the *Live In Japan*. But his own releases from the late 1960s and early 1970s were exploratory, pan-African trances marked with intermittent bouts of screeching—and they were all the more interesting for it. His best records, like *Azpho Zim* and *Black Unity*, are ensemble showcases, and this stands true for *Live At The East*, a 1971 Brooklyn concert.

Sanders states the theme of the opening, "Healing Song," with some ferocity, but the 20 minute piece soon acquiesces the sway of its title. Bassists Stanley Clarke and Cecil McBee balance deep, resonant tones off each other, and pianist Joe Bonner takes an extended, beautiful solo. The second track, "Lullaby" is welder. Restored to one piece after being split over two albums sides, its slightly longer on CD than the original vinyl, but it's still a not entirely successful attempt at a hypnotic drone, mostly harmonium bolstered by percussion and bass throbs.

If the third and final cut, "Waters of the JW Coltrane," doesn't really recall Sanders' former employer, it still a more than fitting of the former territory of "Healing Song." *Live At The East* isn't classic Pharoah Sanders but, dating from his best period, it more than deserves this release.

ARCHIE SHEPP
I KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE

HATGUTD 988 CD

BY PHILIP CLARK

By 1961 jazz was suffering a well-documented identity crisis, and there weren't many musicians who embody the trauma of this difficult era as well as saxophonist Archie Shepp. Although his 1965 impact recording gave us the term "Free Music", paradoxically Shepp himself was always the most traditionally inclined of the New Thing saxophonists, lacking a 'big idea' to put him in the front rank alongside John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman or Albert Ayler. As the early 60s approached, Shepp was embracing the saxophone image wholeheartedly but, as *Wire* contributor Bill Shoemaker points out in a perceptive sleeve note to this quartet studio album, he always recognised the innovative inner dynamic of tradition and thus avoided the repertoire approach that Wynton Marsalis and Stanley Crouch were beginning to formalise. But never mind the theory—if you want a lesson in truly masterful saxophone playing with personality etched into every bar, then look no further: The Shepp group—featuring Ken Werner (piano), Santo Debanne (bass) and John Betsch (drums)—offer Mack's "Well You Needn't" and "Round Midnight", Coltrane's "Giant Steps" and the leader's own ballad "I Know About The Life", and each track is clocked in a different facet of Shepp's personality. The outrageously good "Well You Needn't" is a fine example of Shepp's gruffly abstracted Ball melodies. Herein there is coloured with a distinctive palette of rags and rhythmic pass the parols, and Shepp's solo slams playfully spit-out clichés against dramatic fashions and unadorned alienness. To contrast, "Giant Steps" is as lithe and fluid as the Monk is wantonly awkward and brutalist. This is a less severe vision than Coltrane's—Shepp even takes considerable liberties with the original line—but his imposing solo has tenacity and force.

The extended run here is a profoundly surreal and momentous interpretation of "Round Midnight" that evokes Monk's carefully crafted rales as a composition again, rather than a pip song. Shepp's own ballad ball to match the grandeur of the Monk, sounding slightly mannered in a Ben Webster or Paul Gonsky way. Nonetheless, his attractively off-centred tuning and unlikely digressions match his determination to get the best out of his saxophone. "I Know About The Life"? I reckon you do.

MARTIN SIEWERT & MARTIN BRANDLMAYR
TOO BEAUTIFUL TO BURN

ENTWIRLE CD 101

BY BRIAN MARLEY

The cover image for *Too Beautiful To Burn* is the storm-lashed and confagorated ruins of Brighton's West Pier: a superb piece of Victorian architecture. Disagulation hasn't diminished its beauty; merely offered us a different perspective on what beauty is. The image is apter: beauty and form, especially the beauty inherent in form, are integral to Martin Siewert and Martin Brandlmayr's music. This isn't the first time these Vienna musicians have recorded together. Along with bassist Joe Wilkinson, they made an excellent *HATGUTD* CD, *Trapped*. Eerie, of which *Sever* (guitars, electronics, synthesizer) is a reminder, are galley and noisy though not

necessarily loud, and one of the premier new improv groups on the European scene, *Brandlmayr* is the percussionist in Radian, whose releases on Rhiz, Megs and Thrill Jockey confine treated industrial/environmental sounds, electronics and conceptual improvisation. There's often a hint of robotic, no best technology in Radian's music, but their edginess bars them from the obvious post-rock.

Of course, deciding when and where to imitate nature is as important as choosing the material to be situated. The raw materials for *Too Beautiful To Burn* may have been realised almost entirely by means of improvisation, but the amount of post-production effectively makes them into compositions in truth, the boundaries between improv and composition have all but collapsed in recent years, and for that we should be grateful. The telling waveform notes, feedback-crazes and episodic structure of the opening track, "Form", provide charged moments, lulls, unexpected shifts and unanticipated arrivals. *Too Beautiful To Burn* is the most fully realised disc I've heard from either Siewert or Brandlmayr. "Guitar" uses a soft auto-strife percussion loop and gradually swelling drones to hike up tension before the music reaches a point no less active but suggestive of a troubled stillness. This is a surprisingly attractive music, lacking contrivance, pretty at times, and never substantial.

The final track, "Held", is a tightly edited feedback and bowed cymbal special that turns in on itself and becomes almost evocative, though of when I'm no idea.

GARY SMITH
FUTURE/THROUGH/REVEAL

PRATACITILE PLE11550 CD

BY BRIAN MORTON

Back in 1993, Gary Smith recorded an album with the late John Stevens that made—still makes—me smile. Stevens was in teasing form, laying down little drum grooves, march patterns and occasional bugle blasts, delightedly misperceived by his guitarist collaborator's serious misadventure to anything that approached a rhyme by so much as a foot.

Gary Smith has been linked to Kelli Harris and to that older chap Derek Bailey. Neither comparison makes a whole sense. Unlike Harris, he's unmistakably a joy player at root and unlike the magazine's favorite Anglo Misterioso his work has always been rooted in rhythm, however subliminal. It's there on *Sever* improvisations with Stevens, it's there on *Sever* and *Mass*, his subsequent releases for Chronosphere and Parastichia, and it's certainly present on the very fine *Forgotten Room With Chairs*.

The new album is a kind of coming out, rhythmically speaking. Smith clearly doesn't intend his two collaborators—bassist Jason Rogers and drummer Chris Baker—as "follow the bouncing ball" guides to what previously was hypothetical rhythm, but it's interesting to compare the two tracks here with the unaccompanied "Series" pieces and ask what the group adds. The fair answer is a lot of strong musical detail. And no suggestion that they are simply a normalising presence. The most Mysterioso of the dozen tracks, "Blower Root", is certainly the funkiest thing in Smith's bag to date, but every one of these thoughtfully executed improvisations plays with ideas of



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No business like show business: *Negativland*

No business is a too notch hedgepodge of pop from *Negativland* (Negativland/Swedish Mediamedia 7"). Both sides are upbeat, caustic indictments of the music biz and show the title "No Business." *Negativland's* own side is a chop-up of the big band showstopper "There's No Business Like Show Business." The reimagined words now celebrate stealing and "outlaw music": "When you are stealing/your heart beats like a drum." The flipside, by **Shame 69**, is even better. And darker: An English voice, tinged with punk growls, reminisces about Gary Glitter and the White Hot from 1974, to the "Internet sickness" of today and works up to an "epitaphic" gloss on religion facts and history books open. "I used to work in the music business." Nasty but terrific. (CB)

Take one disc, alter it into an audio form, and release it as a tiny CD in a beautifully custom cover: 1/2 by **Sachiko M** (A: Beat Street 09 3" CD). Recorded this summer on "one empty sampler and three oscillators," the latest from "The Queens of the Shinewave Kingdom" is a 20 minute long, high pitched sine note — vibrato style, except that the minute you raise your head, it quivers into life. The oscillators spit out occasional comments. The laws violate in the use. Following up her strong *Deliver* album with this confident single, Sachiko M is still setting the pace in the bizarre world of Japanese improvised electronics. (CB)

On the side of 310's "Opposite Corners"/"Goto Vinyl" (Jawl PRODUCTIONS), the delicate burble of Tim Doreau and Joseph Dieker is fleshed out by vocals from Andrew Sigler. And the combination makes this a lot less frosty than some of 310's previous releases. The way these whippersnaps peek over the electronic horizon is almost as appalling as the notion of making a garden with Nick Nasty or something. *Goto*, the flip is a fairly psychedelic instrumental with small sheets of organ, good looped percussion and a strangely slowed vibe. (CB)

Nice enough On-U Sound limelife is currently being provided by **Alpha & Omega's** "Ancient Drama"/"Time Dub" (Jawl RS04 7"). Like all their releases, this has lots of thick club mystery audio, burying each and every layer of sound inside those that are choked with hair and garra. No pretensions to pop or anything else save here. It's just clouds of aural pleasure and sweet scented smoke. Breathin' dream. (CB)

If we add of the new **Jack Anchor** songs, "Running In Dreams"/"Lights" (Bright Star BSR20 7") doesn't sound like one of Thurston

Moon's songs off *Sonic Youth's* *Divy*, created with Jeff Buckley, well, I'll eat your mom. Does that mean they were supposed to check out the post many years' worth of material wowed by this persistent son of Ew? Maybe. But let's pray that this fine single is an assembly (CB)

Got a couple of typically cryptic new singles from the Brooklyn Beats label. One is, I think, by **Brooklyn Beast**, called "The Vampire Strikes Back"/"March Of The Oil Barons" (BB074 7"). The two pieces here are extreme slices of reimagined, sometimes volently scratched, beats: ripped pretty much down from anything resembling their original context, then resampled into a baggy loop of noise dedicated to making fun of the atoning demand of the United States which is a goddamn worthy cause. The other one's good, too. "I Am A Pzazel On A Stealth Mission To Kill The President"/"Punk Not Dead, Come Good And Strong"/"T-Speed 106" (BB075 5") is a very messy assemblage of strange garage electronic spew actually by Botticelli Panikawienke, perhaps better known as the drummer for Godspeed You! Black Emperor. At any rate, this is a rather wonderful, circular chunk through the trash heap of history fit for snouts of all sizes. (CB)

It sounds are something of a mystery. But their new single, "Dust & Gutters"/"Radio Waves"/"The Most Real" (Storic Carman WAMB 7") is pretty swell. Using acoustic guitars, battery programmed pulses and scattered random squawks, d_radio pop together a nice set. Here some dark vocals pop up further and further, as do a little harmonica and piano, but mostly this is comprised of sweetly howled mood and texture, piling quietly up against the door of the room where we are all trapped. It may not be liberating, but I sure sound sick. (CB)

Empress are a dark incarnation of Nirva. Hodgkinson from Boyz and Chris Cagle (aka Halfon). Their new EP *For Two* (Wapwood Music 05 7") reminds me quite a bit of the mood that John Cale got on PMS 1918, but without the male vocals or the rock group arrangements. So what does that have? Well, it leaves a sense of melancholy passage through space and time, with songs that are filled with a sort of non-genre, almost abstract kind of longing that is as tangible as it is difficult to describe. Some of the music also recall the sweetest, saddest material by The Go-Betweens, The Briffids and other femme-faced groups who made up Australia's 80s chamber rock opposition. But let's not get bogged down here in references. Such things are just not that useful. (CB)



Blowed and its remix by **Flute** (Expanding EXS103 7") is the first installment in a planned series of eight singles by various contemporary electronic jockeys. Flute (aka Leigh Torg) produces spangly bright and melodic stuff that floats like candy on a sea that does not wither. Indeed, it is a very kelp like in its peacefulness, which is strange medicine in these hard times, eh? The "Timber Falls Motel Roma" by Ian is outdoorsy and mild-mannered, choosing to just pull and highlight certain things, rather than disrupt the flow. No flies on this stuff. (CB)

I have a certain weakness for French groups, from Metal Urbain to Warum Joe to RWA and beyond. There's just something about people doing punky vocalizing in the tongue of Yiddish that gets me where I live. Anyway, **Programme** are from France and their new single, "Une Vie"/"Nimporque Qui Pour Nimporque Qui" (Fat Cat FYAD07 7") lifts a couple of tracks from a recent album and serves them up in very pleasing fashion. Slowly building cascades of keys, thrubs and slouts, the tunes unwind like mile-long strings of very slowly cheese with that classic aggressive French symphony sound, lots of sneering, and little bits of ugly ass guitar. Just decay. (CB)

The third single by the UK's **Puffinberg** is not quite as cracked as the last one, but it will rise the person on "Shan-Cat"/"Off-Set" (Footprint Projects PR006 7") lifts a couple of tracks from the A side has a conversational tone, a bit like a cabdriver who pokes you up real late at night and has some loops blinding out of his radio. The flip is a more loop-borne instrumental that will make you feel like you've covered with hot tar and diving fast on a wet road. A nice enough combo for one little record. (CB)

Split single by **Rabbit Rabbit** and **Jean Of Ars**. "Buckaroo Kids"/"Please Don't Mistake My Anorexia For Shyness" (Record Label R107 7"). Features two combos who are tangled together in order to explain something about the legacy of certain groups from the American Midwest, and about how they blended and parted and went on. The Rabbit Rabbit side is a great slug of altie guitar edge, sludge drums and female vocals. Jean Of Ars (the group from which RR partially emerged) are a bit more formal in their bedroom pop myth creation, being somewhat indebted to the Nick Drake school of surgery, but not in an obsessive way. Their corps are second or third hand sounding, and are full of nice original touches, both musical and lyrical. Did you ever hear the Japanese bootleg album of

Elton John doing all Nick Drake covers? Well, you should. (CB)

The debut single by **Sancho Panza**, "Ball Of Shit"/"This Is My" (Superbugle No Number 7") has a cool, very looped manner. The vocal layers certainly bear comparison to Robert Wyatt's Virgin era recordings, but the clicking shuffle of the music is more in the post-Mayo Thompson wing of Chicago youth idiom. That sounds like it'd be a brittle combination, but it's not. There are strongly doctrinaire acknowledgements of popular musical construction types floating under everything, and the way that things are put together is really pretty goddam cool. Feeded up, yeah, but only (CB)

Like its companion volume *Berlin*, the four 3" CDs of Berlin Stories (Aberth 002) — three dedicated to a different artist — are mounted in an elegant stitching of 7" square covers. These may be things on **Andrew Newman's** customized inside piano but they're hardly in evidence on her four best offerings, whose menacing gey loops and clanking machinery provide further evidence that members of the Phosphor collective are moving off into pastures new. Played loud enough, her second track "11" has more in common with Maroon than it does with Jack Nafatis. Newman's final offering, the self-explanatory "One of a meter noticed by five padds" is positively industrial with a small V, a clanking steel mill of a piece that's danceable in places. Alright. The closest we get to the making disk art, Sachiko M-like whines and occasional tasteless characterizing the new improv sound is table guitars: **Serge Bagdasarian's** "versuch, eine welle zu lesen" ("attempt to read a wave"), a well structured and imaginative 18 minute span of music that steadily builds from isolated digital clunks to scores of noise. Hard to spot the guitar though. But strings are clearly certifiable on **Michael Ruffalo's** "Thank a river", a distinctly lyrical offering for prepared guitar and other (and unadorned) harmonics, which uses silence judiciously to frame its exquisite harmonic work and delicate textures. Ruffalo is also fond of the oddie oddie chime and sporadic crunches from his preparations. In stark contrast, **Art Rupp's** "Metal Soap" is a tour de force of hyperactive acoustic guitar and about as far from Berlin School reductionism as you can get. No place for silent contemplation here. Rupp's facial action painting is both exhausting and enthralling, and there are certainly plenty of strings dapping all over the place. (DW) □ Reviewed by Olive Bel, Byrne Caley and Dan Horvath

The Compiler

Various artists: reviewed, rated, reviewed



Pedal to the metal: Chad Smith

Celebrating with an Ambient flourish and understated fanfare, the West Coast's Cold Blue label has released in digital form their set of seven 10" records, originally released in 1983, **The Complete 10" Series From Cold Blue** (CB0014 38CD). Seven composers each offered a single EP offering a range of California New Music — the "beautiful" minimalism whose best-known practitioners are probably Harold Budd. Taken as a whole, they added up to a counterblast against musical modernism's fustian complexity and cerebral decadence. Over in the UK there were parallel explorations from Michael Parsons, Howard Skempton and Dave Smith at concerts in London's Art Gallery and elsewhere. But the Californians had a sweeter tone — and better recording record labels.

Peter Garland opens with his Mexican-inspired "Matchini Dances", six stately processions for two violins and guitar. Michael Jon Fink's piano pieces are exquisitely simple, tendering on the brink of sentiment but not falling in. Barney Childs presents "Clay Music", a suite of playful pieces for the ceramic instruments crafted by Susan Rowdell, from bass ocarinas to space whistles. Messages found on old postcards are the sources for Reed Miller's layered tone of spoken voice.

But the real a-zig is on the third CD, where Smith, Rick Cox and Daniel Lentz lead out. Smith's pedal steel guitar and 12 string dobro potently open up landscapes under big skies, the best thing I've heard from this intriguing composer and instrument master. On "Three Things Stop Breathing", Cox filters out veiled chords from his prepared electric guitar, generating a slowly revolving kaleidoscope of sound. Finally Lentz goes sensually low, with his "coscating echo system" and gorgeously stacked chords of voices, coming on like an Ambient score of recent Stereolab. Handsoff and dapper drier, Lentz's music sounds like it wasn't made last week, though all the better for not having been assembled in a laptop. His four pieces alone justify picking up this set. (CB)

In 1985, young New York musicians Peter Siegel and Joey Stedman made a recording trip to the Bahamas. In alleyways, backyard gardens and hotel rooms they recorded a number of extraordinary songs, and the following year Nonesuch released the enormously influential **The Real Bahamas in Music And Song** (Nonesuch Explorer 79725 CD) on their Explorer imprint. 12 years later **The Real Bahamas Volume II** (Nonesuch Explorer 79733 CD) appeared, taken from the same sessions. This is not the first review, but the album's low risk most handsome in their cardboard waistbands, with updated notes by Stedman and five color photographs by Guy Droussaut.

The spatially-extended ambient hymning heard here peaked in the sponge fishing days of the 1930s and was largely ignored as uncommercial in its native country. Siegel and Stedman, however, create the impression of islands bursting with local talent, an ecstatic harmony group on every street corner.

Each Prindle leads the charge with "We Will Understand It Better By And By", a remarkable Protestant hymn where the singers seem to be twining on the edge of trance. Prindle's husband sang bass, her daughter treble, and her brother, Joseph Spence, drove the performance alongside with his unique blend of complex guitar picking and guttural howling. Spence's guitar is the only instrument on the album; after its release he became something of a star and joined the US. John Renbourn, Henry Kaiser and Taj Mahal were among those fascinated by his playing, and his view of what constitutes singing leaves most other singers looking oddly nameless. Spence's "Don't Take Everybody to the Your Friend" is a lesson in how to accompany guitar with your voice.

Other wonderful songs here are the husky, R&B-influenced Sam Green ("I Told You People Judgement Coming"), Frederick McQueen ("Dut On The Rolling Sea"), a sponge fishing anthem later covered with orchestral abandon by Van Dyke Parks, Bruce Deane and Shelton Swank. These last two have their own vocal groups, generating intense excitement by gradually coming up a rhythm till the song sails into ecstasy. Protestant Christianity never sounded more attractive. Each Prindle's family, her daughter rocking the baby to sleep, conclude the first volume with the glorious "Great Dream From Heaven" and "I Bid You Goodnight", which was adapted in the UK by the Incredible String Band and in the US by The Grateful Dead. (CB)

Stashed at opposite ends of Europe, Istanbul and Nazareth have little in common — except, perhaps, a partially for contemporary electronics. **art, all, del** (art, all, del No Number CD) documents a joint project held in both cities last September which discussed the relations between digital technology and music in a widening series of panels, lectures and performances. The compilation features specially commissioned pieces from many of the participating artists. Ranging from Scanner and Mostow through to Dutch and Turkish outlets, the CD contains many surprises. The Turkish artists come up trumps in terms of novelty and freshness: Erdem Helvaciglu, the artist behind Loud Music's outstanding *A Walk Through The Bazaar* CD, combines "Personal Cities", a humming soundscape teeming with finny wrought hums and gurgles, Istanbul sound and visual artist 2/5 82's piece "No Tourist No Epodri" is a swirling flow of haunting Oriental

melodies mixed with scurrying beats and Western-style electronic swishes. Egyptian artist Hassan Khan's legend "Baba Dubs No 16" meanwhile, provides a refreshing take on dub with its vibrant organic beats and spine-tingling vocals. The Dutch contingent deserves some kudos too: Nathalie Broye's sensuous vocals on "Love Four Down Legend" remind one of Ticky's Martina, while the vaporous fizzes of Rebel Systems' "STRL Law" are perfectly counterpointed by a dark, thunderous undertone. Even more elemental are the juddering groans and mad howls of Kim Costello's "RND_RND", which uses sounds gathered from 108 of freshly roasted RAM — not for the fainthearted. The Istanbul-Nazareth connection is up and running. (RV)

Compiled by French experimental musician Julien Ottav, **Phonélie #2** (Filar/Vortipulse Piano CD) offers a contemporary perspective on the musicality of language. John Tibary's "Rebirth As Music" finds the AMI played in throatless mode, nodding out passages from Samuel Beckett's works. The musical qualities inherent in Tibary's stresses and intonation are slighted in this treat, emotionally charged piece. Ottav and Gesselin's "Tibary As Music" takes a more overtly musical approach. It weaves extracts from the duo's interview with Tibary with amplified and treated vocal sounds recorded during the course of their meeting. From time to time, Tibary's words mutate into quiddie repeating autisms, providing a rhythmic counterpoint and pushing the piece still further into musical territory.

Brandon LaBelle's "365" meanwhile, eschews musical processes. The piece features LaBelle reading over and over again the single's sentence, "365 is a significant number." Repeated in guitar, monochrome tones, the words form a compelling sonic tapestry where the slight differences in intonation between each take acquire an inordinate significance. The climax to a stimulating CD. (RV)

July Deupree's 12x12x12x12 has been at the forefront of minimalist digital music for the last seven years. Four years ago Deupree set up a subsidiary label, Line, with the intent of documenting conceptual and installation work by musicians exploring the aesthetics of contemporary minimalism. **Two Point Two** (12K 1026/Line_OLE 26CD) continues the label and its subsidiary's joint series, which is designed as a ladder of their upcoming release schedules. Primarily showcasing the 12K roster, disc one includes the likes of Sebastian Ross and Komet, whose contributions are unusually melodic, even as they're constructed over deconstructed rhythms. Drawing on Line's catalogue, disc two is far more rigorous and intense. But **Two Point Two** is most interesting for the collaborations

between German electronica outsider Aarnus Tenkhe and American feedback specialist David Lee Myers, of Arcane Circle. (RV)

Following on from the Domino related live events that took place in London during October, the label cops its tenth anniversary celebrations with **Worles Of Possibility** (Domino No Number 24CD), which comes housed in a digipak selling at a giveaway price of less than £5. Essentially a Domino greatest hits set put together by the label's staff, disc one travels the first decade of this consistently excellent label's output for tracks such as Sebald's "Soul And Fire", Royal Trux's "Spectre" and Palace Music's even more spectral "More Brother Riders", also represented are The Pastels, Pavement, Prism, Jim O'Rourke and the late Elliott Smith. The second section leaves the past behind to stretch out to Domino's present and future, exposing tracks like Roccobro's Paris previously unreleased "Rock De Lowen". (MC)

Tensile (Werg Distribution No Number CD) is an audio documentary compiled by New York gurus Jim Sands and Michael J Farley. Demonstrating contemporary techniques of composing with the acoustic guitar, the artists featured sensually treat it as a traditional performance instrument, or as the initial generator of sonic material to be manipulated and reconfigured on computer. But the focus here mainly lies on the application of various degrees of computer editing and digital signal processing to the guitar. Greg Davis offers a "Sweet" between his guitar and Max/MSP software. Open, such as Adam Baker and Jim Sands, manipulate their sound using a digital delay pedal. In all, *Tensile* is an unusual study of the acoustic guitar, with the music working finely from track to track. Interestingly, it is a Barrio artist Claf Rapp's performance on a completely unrecorded guitar, recorded in real time, that will really shake people's perceptions of how the instrument can be played. (MC)

Based in New York, the Hedrick Martin Institute is the world's oldest and largest non-profit agency dedicated to helping lesbian, gay and transgender youth. All proceeds from **Wig & A Box** (DFF994), a compilation inspired by Hedrick And The Angry Inch (2001), a film about a transsexual German rocker who suffers a belated castration, go to the charity. The album has attracted an strong cast of contributors, including Jonathan Demme, Robyn Hitchcock and Bob Mould, while throwing together some interesting collaborations: The one between Slater-Kinney and The B-Sides' Fred Schneider is a diverting take on the former's standout outburst, but the way the two Demme and La Vergna track flaps from dramatic cabaret to energetic punk makes it the disc's real catch. (MC) □ By Dave Bell, Mike Clarke and Rahma Khazim

originally released on their own label in 1970. Conspicuously, there is a film soundtrack of the same title, but this is the extremely rare original theatrical version and contains entirely different material. Subtitled "a high-teen symphony", the performance centres around sustained

adolescents reading out their own tortured, angry (and in one case, charming) texts and poems. These jokes of family disintegration and mother-hate, dreams and hopes for the future, and love songs to teen murder Nono Nagayama and Mick Jagger are set to an attractively rough and ready pounding psych-rock soundtrack largely composed by guitarist Kuni Kawachi. Kawachi had been a member of pioneering Prog group Happenings Four and his brooding organ riffs feature throughout. As well as heavy rockers like the ghost opera "Let's Go Omote", with its rippling lead line, Off-style choral chants and midsize effects, Kawachi was also capable of delicate, felicitous pieces ideally suited for some of the company's outstanding female vocalists. Several of them developed successful singing careers outside of Teriya Sajiko. One of note is a track composed by a young design school dropout, Shinjuku street hippy and winner of a nationwide amateur competition, by the unlikely name of JA Caesar (Teriya Sajiko also had his own *Shinetsu* and *Salvador Dali*). Set to a simple handclap rhythm, Caesar's take of the pampering life possessed a subtle melodic strength and depth that fended off the minor keys of traditional folk song. Caesar soon came into his own, competing all the music for Teriya's performances and films for the next decade, and finally annulling the romance of the teenage after Teriya's death in 1983.

1972's *Barrenness* saw Caesar and Kawachi splitting the composing chores on a bizarre musical manifesto for sexual liberation. So far so fair, but rather than a tribute to free love, Teriya's husband composed an eloquent plea for the liberation of a sexual underclass suffering discrimination, in the form of a "gay rockabilly". It wasn't Teriya's first experiment with the Tokyo gay scene — one of the earliest plays his wrote for Teriya Sajiko was a vehicle for transvestite actress and chanson singer Akiko Mima, who was rumored to have had a dalliance with Yukio Mishima. *Barrenness*'s opening is a blast — a densely narrated and impassioned call to arms set to a Nazi military march, that links social second class citizenship to impetuous social control and war mongering. Featuring the actual voices of numerous smutty, cross-dressing scene queens, the record's content was deemed so subversive that it was only sold under the counter to Tokyo gay bars. Like a biker bachelorette at the Cagay Aux Folies, fazed out guitar riffs and heavy, swelling, organ-based psych rock tracks nod shoulders with the Ichimiyoshi bellows and tubas, mazzini-smuggling chanson still favoured in certain Shinjuku nightclubs. The reality of gay low songs comes through loud gay actor Ken Takakura doesn't entirely live up to the promise of that fabulous opening, but it still paces more than enough musical suspense until its acquired denseness.

The peak of this branch, however, is the soundtrack to Teriya's 1974 film *Devien Ni Shiku* (Devien in the Country). Described as a fictional autobiography, it tells of a sensitive

adolescent poet who later becomes a film director, stuck with his neurotic mother in a rural northern backwater, who dreams of running off flat with a neighbour's wife and then with a travelling freakshow. The film's fractured narrative of awakening sexuality and severing of parental bonds is captured in hallucinatory imagery and an equally ambivalent soundtrack by Caesar, which blends the whole film together with a subtle, subconscious logic.

The deployment of disparate elements is an all-consuming flow, which works even independently of the images, as masterfully. The familiar gaych guitar, organ and choral chanting are heavy enough in places — as on the disc's definitive reading of Caesar's massive and haunting "Nosen" — to approach Sabbath levels of dense pounding, and there's also a frighteningly visceral vocal turn from folk singer Ken Mikami. But the score also sees Caesar expanding his instrumental palette, scoring some tracks for ad hoc brass band and gertily played guitar, weeping violin and chant. The weird intervals of his sparse, medieval-influenced melodies linger in the memory with the force of nostalgia for a past not directly experienced. It's an amazing performance: from street hippy who never picked up an instrument to film soundtrack composer in five years. Caesar's soundtrack for *Devien Ni Shiku* cut out by a single vote to Yoru Takemitsu for the best film soundtrack of 1974.

TOTONHO & OS CABRA TOTONHO & OS CABRA

TRIMMA TA5001512 CD

BY MARTIN LONGBLEY

The Rio-based Totonho dedicates this disc to Madonna, Jesus Cristo and Fidel Castro. Its gruelled figure most closely resembles the latter, however, making him an unlikely forerunner for his much younger group. His uncompromising singer made his UK debut terrorising WOMAD in July with a confrontational jumble of powerchord rock guitars, sample cut ups, backwards speaking and jibe and bantz, all allied to a strove Brazilian folk tale and resting on a bed of electric minestrone. Totonho will remind his listeners of Osamu's, Los De Abajo and Maná Chao, but operates on a much harder, headbanging level.

Totonho grew up in the north eastern town of Monteiro forming a rock group. De Renegades, at the age of nine. By night they play instruments fashioned from tin cans; by day Totonho sold his kids' bladder snacks. Moving to Rio in 1982, he got heavily involved in social work projects as well as music, and now hosts his own radio show.

Os Cabra (The Goats) were only formed recently, but they're already frighteningly tight. The most exhilarating aspect of Totonho's music is the way it combines acoustic delicacy with lyrical defiance, Brazilian folk forms with Anglo funk bombast. He has the fragmented hooklines to support the crazed vocal rants, happily marring berimbau samples to frenetic scratching on "Fox Pure Camomille", or simply singing the sweet and pure melodies of "O Vaqueiro".

Os Cabra makes a rousing concert, with the leader's snarling Portuguese couplets streaming out close to but not quite up. By the second track, Totonho switches on the megaphone to bark like Mark E. Smith.

THE BILL WELLS BIG BAND SOCIETY OF MUSICIANS 24-11-92

LOATHSOME REELS UNCD001 CD-R

THE BILL WELLS OCTET THE BILL WELLS OCTET

LOATHSOME REELS UNCD008 CD-R

LIVE 98

LOATHSOME REELS UNCD008 CD-R

JAD FAIR & BILL WELLS

WHALE

FRIENDS AND RECORDS FRIENDS CD

BY KETHA VAGLINE

Those familiar with the recent work of multi-instrumentalist Bill Wells with The Pastels, Arab Strap and The Gentle Waves, in which he falls perfectly in step with their bruised low-key romanticism, may find these documents of his other interests surprising. Even on last year's disc *record Also In White*, his spare but glowing piano sketches owe more to Wilco's stark soundscapes than to the Scottish jazz scene from which he emerged in the 1990s, so it is fascinating to hear these recordings from that vibrant, if reportedly somewhat turbulent period.

Released as limited edition CD-Rs on his own label, these two albums benefit from a warts and all production that only adds to their rhapsodic charm. Ragged, Rabelais themes build from lower register motifs (the late Lindsay Cooper — not the Henry Cow bassoonist — is a big-hearted presence on bass and tuba) before wild, wheezing alto and trumpet enter their outward and upward. The Big Band record transcends most. It has some of the ecstatic fire of Coltrane's *Ascension*, a little of the lush modal romance of *Nefertiti* and Miles Davis and a lot of Mingus on "Return Of The Miss", whose lumbering, New Orleans via Fats Domino materialises from a swampy mosaic of trombones and electric bass, with Wells mostly restricting himself to the latter instrument. At times the centre of the music falls away, leaving gently eddying monolithic drones that recall Ligeti, before everything coalesces into off kilter Gershwin, or lovely but odd dinner jazz.

It's a great shame that Wells has a record. The first half of the 92/93 Octet disc is far less assured. The ensemble attempts to play it straight, and the results are frequently ghostly. "Don't Sing That Song" is a sickly Let's Bang samba and "Blue Illumination" is a hauntingly bleak desperate to break free of its moorings, none of the solos remotely approaching liveliness. When the octet hit "Slab", however, with its double drum attack and low, swelling bass, the break from polite jazz orthodoxy into rockier terrain liberates the players to the point where, compared to what preceded it, they sound positively Overman.

The more considered 96 Octet disc, featuring different personnel, focuses less on ensemble fire and more on adventurous, confident soloing. The opening 45 minute medley features a committed contribution from trumpeter Harry Beckett, along with some sterling work from John Burgess and Steve Kottis (jazzes) and Chick Lyall (jazzes). "Remains Intact" and "First Fall" spotlight the bandleader's developing compositional aesthetic, their very ethos foregrounding the direction he went on to take as a pianist in his trio recordings.

The new impulse album with ex-Hell Ensemble fronted by Neil Jarry may well be the work of a different artist. It's a rough home document, to say the least. Fair guitars, groans and grets sound unreasonably utterly aimlessly, while Wells

from Cold Blue



the complete *White* series from Cold Blue. A CD boxed set, 1998. A. Subterranean music by Peter Dinklage, Alan Smith, Bill Cole, Samy Chik, Michael Jon Fox, Paul Miller and David Lerner. To more of us who stumbled upon Cold Blue's little snow-flecked disc, they were good friends... a whole wonderful world of new sounds... —John Sponner, founder of WHC's New Sounds

...that might be called part of the new California School... a particular viewpoint and consummate good taste... —John Gifford, *San Francisco Chronicle*

...defines a current Southern California sound, undisciplined, ecstatic and unusual... —LA Weekly

"Compositions by some of LA's finest composers" —Owen Scola

www.coldbluemusic.com

The Boomerang

New reissues: rated on the rebound

Grooving with a Pict: Ron Geesin

Was E! comedian Ken Dodd who used to shout, apropos of nothing, "I simply must have a burst on my banjo!"? Whether Dodd got the idea from seeing **Ron Geesin** or not, there's a rich vein of ancient music left eccentrically underlying Geesin's highly personal and original music as *Right Through...* And *Beyond* (Hoodscope/HEDD3 CD). Plus *Salvo* (Mellon and The Goons, of course). The Goons was through 60s Britain like a thread from an unwilling mallet. Geesin would clearly have loved to be a Goon, and others, notably under their influence included The Beatles, whose producer George Martin arrived fresh from producing Geesin records. If Geesin's music is personal, it's certainly not inward looking. He played banjos, guitars and keyboards as the lyrical, muscular and restless. He doesn't as much limit you into his world as ferociously enjoy yours. Back in the early '70s Geesin left what he considered, hilarious and very angry "New Year Adventure", one of the previously unissued tracks from 1977, comes across like a furious hair collar. These bonus pieces were commissioned by the BBC and then not used. Geesin was livid and printed his correspondence with the BBC in the sleeve notes. The rest of the album was originally issued in 1977 as *Right Through*. Relentlessly chasing Pictish chipmunks link behind a doctored Geesin pop the door, close it, open, close, faster and faster... Angular far-angled organ melodies lead, via open air harmonic vases and tempo workouts, to an impressive run for four eccentric guitars. This eccentrically segues magnificently into "There's Snowdowns 'Till", for which he becomes a one-man Pink Floyd. Geesin worked with Phish Floyd on 1970's *Atom Heart Mother*, but surely must have inspired Unimagnifico's "Several Species Of Small Furry Animals Gathered Together In A Cave And Grooving With A Pict".

Geesin was just recently Creative Sound Specialist in Amsterdam at London's Royal College of Art. Much of his CD feels as though he has cast himself as an animated character in his own cartoon. Some passages are meandering and swirling, but the album's first half stands up well, and the added "Seaw New Year" tracks give a good impression of Geesin's energy when performing live (CD).

All the work that *Salvo* Boon aka Pete Kemler has produced under the **Experimental Audio Research** umbrella, the most satisfying was made in the 1990s when his synthesizers and guitars were augmented by percussionists Kristin Hovstad, John Martin on saxophones and Kevin Shields on treated guitar, the collection they gave the music was telling even when it bordered on the subliminal. For *The Kicker*

Experiment (10th CD CD), German sound artist Thomas Klineer and his Porter Pinks partner Andy Mellich took source material recorded by the quartet back in 1991 and reshaped it for its initial 97 release. Making a meeting of works, where two different approaches were deployed to achieve the same state, perhaps this album was an overlooked gem. Sections of EAP's aqueous group improvisation are morphed into pulse form and then gradually expanded in a very Steve Reich way. At times this results in vast, dense sonic areas; at others, the musical material clinging to the pulse starts to unravel and drop behind the beat, before swirling around it like a ferret tossed around a cushioned football. Most satisfyingly the music never sounds doted to a particular technology. No doubt it will continue to retain its power and mystery. (MB)

But does 90 tracks if there's a better reason than *Zeit's An Unsolicited* (Life Sentence & Save What? CD) to play the random button on top of CD players, the manufacturers kept it to themselves. Not only that, the detailed booklet accompanying this expanded release of early recordings made by Zev in his *Unsolicited* suggests that the shuffle and repeat functions should be used to cut up, loop and rearrange these these accumulations of churning white noise and heaving repetitive tracks. This applies only to the first 98 entries, however, which constitute *Life Sentence*, a collection put together in San Francisco in 1981 utilizing a *Farfisa* organ, *Electron* and an array of old cassette machines. Released in 1986 as a limited edition box set, it has been further enhanced by the addition of an extended live recording, *Save What?*, made at Enchirion in 1982 and hitherto only available in an edition of 50 cassette copies. In stark contrast to the atom uncompromising nature of these *Unsolicited* performances is the fragile existence of the recordings themselves, as illustrated by the frantic search revealed in the notes to find used copies for their music 20 years on and already disappearing fast... (MB)

Between 1987 and 1993, **David Lee Myers** created a series of sound projects under the collective title *Acane Device*, that dealt directly with the pure uncertainties of feedback within a closed circuit system. Utilizing a censored box of ticks that had only itself to refer back to and play with, he secured a random order parameter that links the early feedback experiments of David Tudor and the *Banios* during the 1950s and 60s with the brimmed digital landscapes of today. Originally put out on tape in 1988 by *Reflex*, there's a lively response to the 11 sequences that make up *Acane Device* *Engines Of Myth* (JER DLM1 CD), reflected in the

athorism of most tracks, which conform to an almost standard pop single format of two minutes and 30 seconds. The cumulative effect is one of veering ascetic: alien swoops, reverberating clats and glassing, alternating with swoosh pulsations and flustering signals. Extending this issue is the double LP *Acane Device 2: Improvisations*. For *Feedback*, also released in 1988, a set of four pieces incorporating sampled feedback, voice and FM radio, as well as complex manipulation. Recalling a time before the modular synthesizer there's slow organisation of electroacoustic chaos, the *Myers Acane Device* project is about the pleasure of running wild in uncharted terrain. It's an experience to be savoured. (RM)

With its two anthems, "White Rabbit" and "Somebody To Love", **Jefferson Airplane's** early 1967 release *Surrounding Pikes* right have been conscripted as the official LP of the Summer of Love. After *Bathing At Boker's* (PVC/SVG Heritage 53225 CD), released later that year, is the group's unmatched psychedelic masterpiece. Having just delivered a gold record and two top ten singles, with *Barker's Airplane* not only had access to sophisticated new technology, they were also placed in the unusually privileged position of being able to stretch the highly unstructured recording sessions out over a period of months.

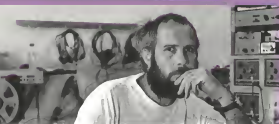
The acid-soaked result, now reassured in a glorious remastered version with bonus material and extensive new liner notes, shows them working both within and outside the traditional rock songform. The frequent drifts away from normality start with the record's opening note – a wailing scree first across the listener's bows in the form of lead guitarist Jorma Kaukonen's screaming feedback into "The Ballad Of You And Me And Poelzel". Jack Casady's bass playing is unapologetically prominent throughout, whirring his firing off of blurring low notes (if which there are several) or weaving elaborately complex patterns for the "others" playing. For his part Kaukonen sounds possessed, as he attacks his highly distorted instrument with near violence, most notably in his use of tremolo and Syd Barrett-like dashed chords on "The Last Will Of The Castle". In addition to her role leading the group's trademark wall of voices willing to approximate a union, Grace Slick contributes the brilliant manic "Rojayon", an anti-reworking of *Ulysses* with constant shifts in key and tempo. Singer and rhythm guitarist Paul Kantner adds to the psychedelic atmosphere with his disembodied, soulless vocalising, particularly on his gorgeous acoustic number "Martha".

Barker's also saw them making use of such

experimental techniques as odd time signatures, stream of consciousness wordplay (Slick's free Indian chanting and blurring out of irrelevant words like "mamado"), and musique concrete. Somewhere between a tape collage composition and a freedom freakout, "A Small Package Of Your Will Come To You Shortly" features randomly splashed instruments, snippets of background conversation to a Frank Zappa, and trippily abrupt stereo panning. Showing off the more musically side of the group, "Spore Change" is a rare minute free improvisation built around Casady's virtuosic bass solo. If you've only ever heard "White Rabbit", listen up. (DM)

Susan Deyhle & Richard Hewitt's 1987 album *Desert Equations: Acaxtli* (Grammex Discs CRAM111 CD), part of the Grammex Global Soundscapes series, underlines the Gramms band label's early commitment to global fusion experiments. The New York-based Deyhle was once Peruvian vocal techniques to Hewitt's undulating bed of vintage Fairlight Emulators Prophet and DWT gear. The results are strikingly serene to the passing of time. Deyhle's clipped voice is often used for its percussive, repetitive qualities, with linear parts sung over the top of her gaps. The lyrics are akin to a processed Hawaii hula, a hoarsely wailing *Diemanda* Gales or a jittery Laurie Anderson too. These pieces were made for a 1986 dance performance at Carnegie Hall, where multiple fact no doubt added greatly to their aural pleasures, soft guitar and water splash percussion. The last two selections "Armour" and "Desert Equations" are notably taut, suffused with Hewitt's sensuous may fluke. (MJ)

For **Ornette Coleman's** 1962 album *Dumbell* (Atlantic Jazz Masters 8122/37142 CD), the leader is accompanied by Don Cherry on pocket trumpet, Scott LaFaro on bass and Ed Blackwell on drums. After a typically speedy first statement on the opening "Waltz", Cherry sets out on a remarkable solo, scribbling with a thorough and whimsical third soon melting into the leader's own like bobbing and weaving. With snappy bass and drum solos to follow, this 16 minute track serves as a complete statement of the quartet's polarity and orientation. Blackwell constantly shifts his emphasis, dotting around the solos, picking up an Afro-population on "T&T", while the horns mark their own cut, speckled statements. A sense of separate suspension is maintained, as Ornette chases and splits out endlessly inventive strains, daffily melting into his melodic matter. The well chosen horns cut is a ten minute "Three Leaders", which whimsically surfaced on the 1993 *Bluey & A Rem Thing* box set. (MJ) [Reviewed by Mike Barnes, Clive Bell, Ken Hollings, Martin Longley and Dave Maudslay]



messes about with his sample, layering and effecting Fair's voice to create a snowball shadow chorus. Both "Blows" and "Waves" have their moments, when the singer drops down to a whisper and Wells explains the guise of his voice. While Fair as no Phil Spector in the out vocal stakes, he's likable, spontaneous and funny enough to make this an entertaining listen.

ROBERT WYATT SOLAR FLARES BURN FOR YOU CUNEIFORM RUNWAYS CD BY EDWIN HUNCEY

Like the proverbial London bus, you wait as years for a new Robert Wyatt album to appear and then two arrive at the same time. Close behind his latest *CuckooLand* comes this impressive collection of recordings that loop back to his early period as a solo artist and demonstrate how his fertile creative brain was churning at the time. Mostly compiled from outtakes, John Peel radio sessions and experimental pieces recorded between 1972-74, the collection is enhanced with Arthur John's short landscape film, *Solar Flares Burn For You*, for which Wyatt produced the soundtrack. Recorded on the Riviera jet airplane that transported through his richly atmospheric album *Room Bottom*, Wyatt's minimalist and sensitively spaced vocal and keyboard accompaniment to John's dramatic painting encourages one to peer more closely at the closer imagery of ocean, possibly Cirrus, treated TV footage and solarized draw-ings.

Although he went on to record the track with a group for his *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* album, it is the warts and all solo version here that acquiesces the heart. This melancholy and occasionally playful musical mood surfaces constantly throughout *Solar Flares*, with Wyatt's cover version of Neil Diamond's "I'm A Believer" being just one shining example. In lesser hands misfiring an old Monroe hit would have resulted in nostalgia or parody, but here Wyatt transforms the song into a personalised anthem that rings with love, courage and inner strength. Equally moving and beautiful are early recordings of "Mills" (aka "Mills") and "Sea Song" which he later fleshed out for his second solo album, *Room Bottom*. In their solo state the songs become almost limnaceous with — on "Sea Song" in particular — Wyatt's bubbling solo sounding as though he is churning from the bottom of the ocean and playing his piano with octopoid arms.

Elsewhere the satirical "We Got An Arts Council Grant" chart battles against Wyatt's more political side, while the just recently recorded "Tease Briefing" returns to the firm but gentle jazz vibe that he successfully explores on *CuckooLand*. As a supplement to his recent *Solar Flares* work spectacularly, but it should be regarded an important addition to Wyatt's discography in its own right.

DAJUNI YAO CINNABAR BIRD DRIZZLE JURIAN MUSIC 185901 CD

PEI: PATTI: TOMORROW WILL TAKE CARE OF ITSELF POST-CONCRETE POSTERS CD

BY BRIAN HANLEY

Dajuni Yao is a converted maltruster. He's a composer, sound artist, cybernetics artist, radio

DI, wearable artist, concrete poet and — in the case of the album under review by Pei — music minimalist and scene designer. Both CDs originate from Berkeley, California, where Yao works as an academic. But the compositions on *Cinobar Bird Drizzle* speak only of his homeland, China, and in Mandarin. The voice heard throughout these seven tracks belongs to poet and opera singer Jie Fan. Her light, conversational readings of her own texts, plus others by Yao and Tang Xianou, allow the musicality of the language to subtly favour the compositions. The opening track features real time computer-generated poetry. Three pieces are made from nothing but spoken Mandarin, while others use environmental recordings and draw on a vast repertoire of electroacoustic sounds and processes. Track five is constructed through juxtaposing blocks of loosely linked sonic materials: "Fimbeds and sounds of spring, writing on a laptop computer, writing on paper, taking calligraphy rubbings from 2000 year old stones, discussions on writing, etc." The compositions are ambivalent and moodily very successful. A line of perfect description on the album sleeve reads: "Poetically incorrect, electroacoustic Mandarin masquerade caroline." Obviously Mandarin speakers will gain most from this album, but Yao's recasting of the language in a variety of compelling musical forms should be of interest to everyone.

Tanwasee composer Pei is much less interested than Dajuni has in organically evolving forms, with a tendency to create harsh little loops from fragments of sound. Some achieve the relentless, machine-like momentum of early minimalists such as Steve Reich. Others lurch out of ambient soundscapes or glitchy electronics into something more akin to a drum 'n' bass workout. The 23 tracks on *Pei*, most of them less than four minutes, are patchily affixed by blunts of musical information best heard at maximum volume. Because the compositions contain very little development, it's mostly left to the sequencing to provide variety and maintain listener interest. Much of the sequencing works well, but subtlety isn't one of Pei's strong points. "When Trunk And Burnt To To Make A Volcano" is long, abrasive and ultimately tiresome, and the would-be dancing clicks on "In Peak Random" feel leaden. If *Pei* had contained more tracks like the shrewdly allusive "+++", I suspect it would have been rather wonderful.

OTOMO YOSHIEDE WE INSIST? MORRIS RECORDS CD BY CLIVE BELL

First released in 1992, *We Insist?* was Otomo Yoshihide's album debut as leader. These 24 tracks sound like he's smacking his brain for every musical idea that might be stored in there and dumping them on the table, ready to be explored. As he points out in his notes for this edition, "You'll find all the genres of my music in the 90s, from Ground Zero, Sampling Virus, Memory Drizzle and ISO to film music." Otomo plays decks and guitar, and builds collages on B tracks, cassette, DAI and computers. It's another case of sampling before samples were available.

The opening tracks were written for theatre groups and are the most overtly political. Reading nationalist orders fight for space with the

extremest of extreme noise guitar solos, over stop/start rock backing. "Terminal-Zero", "Hardcore Chinese Open" and "Be-top" are frenzied glimpses of Otomo and Bandoras vocalist Eye tearing up the scene — every bit as invigorating as the improvised aesthetic that stunned audiences at Otomo's first UK performance, at the 1994 LMC Festival. Six more brief tracks are Otomo solo, live and unaided. His advanced clock tracking technique is fully formed, with all the utmost elegance of an early John Wu movie.

Contrast comes from seven tracks prepared for TV programme Berlin Gatehouse. This is lush work, more in line with Otomo's film scores. A muscular wall-patche offers contrast for future Ground Zero members Junji Hirose (sax) and the great Masahito Uemura (drums). Outstanding is "Film Maker From Newburg", a spacious blues with cover fragments featuring against Kato Nishiki's rich bass guitar chords.

John Zorn's influence is apparent and his own appears on two tracks. On "Quiet Face At GSK" Zorn is cunningly collocated around his own playing. But maybe his biggest contribution is his example of musical fearlessness and utter clarity of ideas. "Cash Dispenser" is dreamy and filmic but still crystal clear, as the dispenser bleeps and shuffles through cash to a piano accompaniment. Finally, "Last Words" casts a template for Ground Zero, and "Wells" sets an ornate obelisk skirting in anticipation of the group's mighty, how long piece, "Consumed Red". The whole album shows off Otomo's chemistry and skill at musical organisation, which has made him almost an international goodwill ambassador for extreme music.

CARLOS ZINGARO & VOCECRACK BA KAGGRIA SIRSI 2014 CD BY DAN WARRINGTON

This encounter between Portugalia Carlos Zingaro and Swiss electronics vet Vocecrack was recorded live in Paris in October 2001, and represents the most recent work of Zingaro from his initial guitar-fiddle into laptop grandmaster — as also documented on last year's *Sm* outing *Case Of Sand* and *Pennuto*, its subsequent re-ed CD by Portugaise collective *Jealunhagria*.

Though he's been interested in electronics for many years, Zingaro has recently turned his attention to the kind of try scratches, scraping behind the bridge and acousmic aspects that he inherits tended to avoid in favour of unabashed expressionism — he 1998 album *Sole* on *Sole*, recorded in a Lisbon monastery with a seven second event, remains a classic. In contrast, the real time processing here is openly — even aggressively — digital, yet the resulting web of sound retains the delicacy and fragility that has always characterised Zingaro's violin work.

Meanwhile, Vocecrack remain defiantly electronic, Norbert Mising and Andy Gull doing their usual thing of carpeting the soundscape with characteristically slow moving rumbles, bleeds and drizzling state. It's left to Zingaro to impose form on the proceedings, adding and subtracting loops to move the music towards and away from its climactic elements until a rather abrupt fadeout at the 53 minute mark. □



ANTHONY BRAXTON / JOE FONDA
Clarke 1992
Anthony Braxton / madhouse
Joe Fonda / double bass



NAM
Squad of Time
Live at the Venice festival
Ahmad Abdolkhalil / trumpet, violin
Abe Hendry / double bass
Mian Karim / double bass
Jimmy Weinstein / drums



PAUL DUNNALL OCTET
Buckling
The Great Divide Live
Paul Dunnall / saxophone, bagpipes
Paul Dunnall / saxophone
Marianne Gellie / saxophone
Gordon Laidlaw / trumpet
Svenel Pahl / saxophone
Keith Tappin / drums
Paul Rogers / double bass
Tony Lewis / drums

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Avant Rock

Reviewed by Edwin Pouncey

ARMPIT BUTIA DAZE CELEBRATE THE PHENOMENON NO NUMBER CD

A glib, piece of 14-16 bedroom buffery and tingling improvisation where Armpit sounds half-heartedly on an electric guitar through a cheap amplifier, while occasionally bashing away on a demand strident or stabbing at the keyboard of a piano. Extended drones, coupled with feedback, a wheezing harmonium and the odd sequen can also be heard, but the feeling that Armpit has simply landed the guitar against the amplifier while dealing with some other domestic chore is hard to erase. His shamistic, almost lethargic approach to creating music, though, deserves to be applauded, and his Armpit's ideas begin to stretch out and become more involved, the growing feeling that this might just be a work of genius kicks in. With the emergence of Armpit, Jendek has got some competition to keep him awake at night.

BLACK FOREST/BLACK SEA BLACK FOREST/BLACK SEA LARI MOBILE DOGS/SECRET EYE LV064W NDS0039 CD

Black Forest/Black Sea is primarily Jeffrey Alexander and Marion Goldberg, on unusual folk styled duo who sound straightforward enough on their hoarse, until something unexpected turns the typically played basic song they are playing upside down, backwards backwards playing, electronic effects, a shortwave radio and some knob twiddling are all incorporated into their sound, which twists from traditional folk Americana to beatnik improv and back again. Noting, however, is quite what it seems, and this constant sound shifting gives Alexander and Goldberg's musically metaphoric contributions to the New World America act an edge over the competition. For B/F/S are genuinely strange.

BRIDE OF NO NO BRIDE OF NO NO ANASTASIA ALP411 CD

This pretty basic double guitar, bass and drum kit work out was recorded in Chicago last October but has only just surfaced. What gives Bride Of No No's record some heat is their distinctly uneasy and occasionally uneasy songs, which are sung in a strange, purely belted by bass and piano player AJ. Meanwhile the guitar totally goes ahead, shooting spines of Mago Band (touching on Mail) and early Pere Ubu into the mix, which gets uglier as the record continues. Special mention should also be made of the end-of-song cover, a series of bleached out stiffs of The Brides in action, where they come across like Dave Gahan to hell.

THE BAND OF BLACKY RANCHETTE STILL LOOKIN' GOOD TO ME THE BAND OF BLACKY RANCHETTE CD

Given lead singer Howie Gels ride into town on the back of the Band Of Blacky Ranchette oration, with a sympathetic posse of guest musicians right behind him. As usual, the mood here is quirky Country rock complete with

sharp lyrics, which Gels delivers in a drawl that unintentionally mimics a groovy Neil Young. Unfortunately, Gels has been doing the kind of thing for so long that it now sounds clichéd with cliché, making it difficult to decide whether his obsession with Country music is based on passion or parody.

EXPLOSIONS IN THE SKY THE EARTH IS NOT A COLD DEAD PLACE BETULA UNION BELLAGOS CD

Austin, Texas quartet Explosions in The Sky play skint and minutely balanced rock guitar instruments that, as their name implies, feel as though they are going to go off with a huge bang once the fuse has been lit. Instead EIS come up with a rock 'n' roll folkwork display that is dazzlingly playful and wonderful to behold. The five channel tracks that make up The Earth Is Not A Cold Place possibly owe more to Sonic Youth than the group's Texas contemporaries, but at the heart of their ebbing and flowing rock rampage, the familiar spirit of 60s Texas psychedelia is clearly alive and active.

DON FLEMING BAND OF THE RUN SECRET EYE/ARNDT TOSH 1001

In the same spirit that produced Pussy Galore's tribute to The Stones' 'Ella On Main Street' comes former Velvet Monkey/Gumball/Dan Sparn member Don Fleming, who dismutes Wings' sacred Band On The Run LP and then loses the instructions on how to put it back together. He is assisted in his misadventure by Joe DeFilippis, Ken M. Rosenblatt and co-Pussy Galore/Free Nite vocalist Julie (aka Julie) Gartz who presumably take on the combined misdeeds of Penny Lane and Linda McCartney, leaving Fleming to just mangle the project. Tracks of the original album will no doubt be tortured to hear what Fleming and co have done to it, but for those who don't give a stuff about McCartney or Wings, this phonetic version of their massive-selling '70s album is hugely enjoyable. They shoot "let" down in flames, and a loopy Country sample to "Helen Wheels" that sticks in your memory like a fishhook, and warp "Processors Last Words (Drink Me)" out of shape with treated vocals and backward vocals that flow over a slowed down, minimal piano and bass riff. Band On The Run works both as a sharp critique of the album and its revelatory reworking that perhaps even its original creator might agree is pretty fab.

LAIKA WHEREVER I AM I AM WHAT IS MISSING TOD PURE PURE 141 CD

Made up of vocalist Margaret Feldner, instrumentalist Guy Flesher and drummer Lee Ocetelli, Laika are a solid sounding electro rock whose internal vein resembles Porcupine Tree at their best. Their melody is subtly scintillated and immaculately packaged sound needs to be heard in surroundings other than the living room it needs taking out for a long

hard motorway drive, so you can hear it bailing out from the dashboard speakers of some polished and processed sports car. Outside with the mean world flashing by, the world sounds fabulous, inside it sounds like one long car ad.

LONG LIVE DEATH TO DO MORE THAN GOD... TO DIE LONG LIVE DEATH NO NUMBER CD

Opening with the thunderous, Magna-styled bomb of Christopher Friedland's "big drum," US artist Long Live Death simply glide into a chart that makes them resemble The Incubus in Shing Band during their Merganser's Beautiful Gougher heyday. That quite a surprise as the title and cryptic, skulled out cover promise a hard rock free for all, instead we are treated to wondrously composed, folk-flecked ballads made even more magical by instrumentation that includes cello, accordion, violin, mandolin and saw. Fans of Santamandale Of The Sun, Double Leopards and the aforementioned ISB will surely find something here to cling onto.

JODIE JEAN MARSTON JODIE JEAN MARSTON SECRET EYE/ARNDT CD

US singer/songwriter Jodie Jean Marston's album is a varied mix of hallucinatory dream traversing, and backwards Country and folk-styled acoustic guitar that recalls Carole King's recent, somewhat controversial treatment of Willie Nelson's classic Red Headed Stranger. Intermittently backed by electric guitar and bass player Bobby Amelio and Jasper Springer on flute — who add an extra shade of grey to her already dark musical palette — Marston's slow moving ballads are striped of all frills, her vocals soaring over the fragile instrumentation. This is a subtle but highly effective technique puts the listener into a hypnotic trance that's virtually impossible to snap out of until Marston's ready to break the spell. Like the Black Forest/Black Sea record, this is another oddity worth looking down from the Secret Eye label.

CHARLIE PARR CRIMINALS AND SINNERS MISPLACED MUSIC 194 CD

Charlie Parr is a Country blues musician from the Duluth, Minnesota music scene. The sleeveless for his entertaining Criminals And Sinners album speculate about Robert Johnson, Nick Drake and John Fahey as possible influences, before deciding on Harry Smith's Anthology Of American Folk Music as a more likely source. Parr is too sassy and energetic a player to sound like Johnnys, too up — even when he's singing the blues — for Drake and not complex or cantankerous enough to borrow from Fahey. But he's good enough to earn his place in the Anthology act that has sprung up since the rediscovery of all things Harry Smith, as his music is as simply played and finely honed as anything on that collection. Parr's "hardy folk music" barely strays or even desires to alter the genre in any way, but it has its moments of mystery and reflection.

FRANK ROWENTA SCHLUSS IN DEN OFEN COM ELENJANE COHEN CD

German experimental musician Frank Rowenta, of Rowenta/Khan, unleashes a complex and varied mixture of solo electric guitar and electronics supplemented with voice samples and natural sound effects. Spread over four tracks that mostly sound like they were recorded live at audience level, his music shifts from subtle lounge riff plucking to scratched and treated field recordings, infused with echo and a dead electric hum. This rock concrete approach produces constantly surprising results, sometimes sinister and often frightening. Definitely one to be played loud and in the dark.

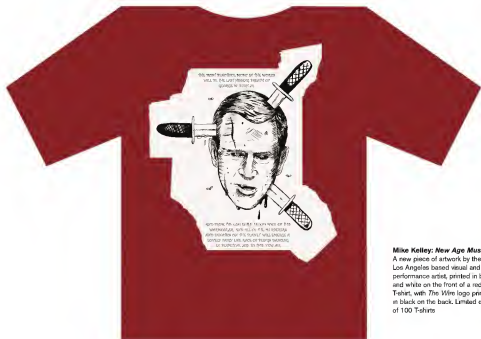
VIKI/HAIR POLICE VIKI/HAIR POLICE LOAD LOAD047 CD

This double dose of trouble from Adult support artist Viki and disaffection workers Hair Police is the latest in Load Records' ongoing split series. Viki has been compared to early Suicide and Michigan electro rockers Wolf Eyes, but really she sounds like a granger Peaches using cheaper equipment. On songs such as "Mister Magic" and "Two Mock," the machinery starts to rebel, with huge swerves of synthetic feedback and cracked circuitry overheard cutting in to boost the repressive factory feel that pumps and jerks through Viki's half. Hair Police take a similar approach to kick out their gear, but halfway through something vital snaps and all hell breaks loose, as what resembles a psychotic submarine surfaces and tears right into the grove. Ripped flesh, broken bones, snapped guitar necks and rampant. Hair Police lay abuse as the end result, culminating in a crazed, cheap electronic cacophony that staggers in a pulsing killing threshold. Order and LA's Viki's sound have something at their most messy. Not the prettiest thing you'll hear this month, but unquestionably essential.

YO LA TENGO TODAY IS THE DAY! MANHOLE CD08812 CD

The cover of Yo La Tengo's latest assortment of songs recorded since 1999 cheekily appropriates the design from Ornette Coleman's Ramon as The Question? As with their 12" of Sun Ra's "Nuclear War," the artwork implies a jazz connection, and sure enough on "Questionmark" Hoboken's first are joined by William Parker, who blows the track apart with an ecstatic burst of double root horn playing. Quite how and why this happened the sleeveless never explain, but it's a wild, delicious moment. The group also offer up their version of Bert Jansch's immortal "Needle Of Death" (with drummer George Hoeft providing a No-like vocal), an engaging and enigmatic instrumental cello called "Dr. Cloud," plus a live live and unplugged version of "Cherry Chapstick", taken from a Melbourne radio broadcast in 2000. As good as all this gets, Yo La Tengo sometimes sound like a group for those who like the idea of Sonic Youth but would really prefer something softer. □

The Wire T-shirts 2003



Mike Kelley: *New Age Music*

A new piece of artwork by the Los Angeles based visual and performance artist, printed in black and white on the front of a red T-shirt, with *The Wire* logo printed in black on the back. Limited edition of 100 T-shirts



The standard T-shirt

A black T-shirt with *The Wire* logo printed in grey across the front. Unlimited edition

The Wire T-shirt comes in two types: a standard black shirt printed with *The Wire* logo; plus a series of limited edition shirts featuring specially commissioned designs by a variety of underground artists and musicians, including this month,

Mike Kelley (see *The Wire* 235). These special edition T-shirts are being printed in limited runs of just 100 shirts each. Once these have been sold, that's it, they won't be reprinted. For details of prices, sizes and how to order, turn to page 101

SOUL JAZZ RECORDS PRESENTS

DYNAMITE!



SOUL JAZZ RECORDS SJR LP/CD 84

DISTRIBUTED BY VITAL IN THE UK

Critical Beats

Reviewed by Philip Sherburne

MALIK ALSTON CATERPILLAR

THIRD EAR RECORDS 13'

London/boyo label Third Ear continues to promote the concept of "Detroit Badtunes" on this single from Detroit producer Malik Alston. Fortunately, what could have turned out to be a limited concept — jazz-funk post-Techno with a molasses spin — grows new legs under Alston's prodigious, *His CV*, which includes collaborations with Redcoats, Ayo and Symesai, virtually guarantees the presence of jazz synths — here in the form of jaunty Rhodes lines, off-kilter breaks and the like — but they never slide into cliché. Indeed, on "Caterpillar," organ lines reminiscent of Carl Craig's "The Cosmos" leap rising outward, careful never to become pinned down in concretion. "Mike/Gomez," co-written with Faust, Brian Garet, harnesses piano and standup bass in a salsa-contestant while drum machines fire sugary volleys, like a much rougher version of Metro Area's "Polo." On "Bussem," an Afro-Brazilian drum pattern picks up the Latin vibe for an almost entirely percussive homage to Carnaval. Finally, "Higher" returns to pure Techno territory with a turn-up of rubbery arpeggs scrambling wistfully through with many a snap, swell, until the organ solo, anyway.

GLASS DOMAIN GLASS DOMAIN EP

CLONE C033A 13'

LAM

BALANCE OF TERROR EP

CLONE C043C 13'

Retardman's Gabe label continues to dig into Techno history with two releases from ancient Onyiah tape sets. *Life After Marlin's* (1985's *Life After Marlin*) originally issued on Rob Hood's *Force* in 1992, captures seven tracks of hard-edged analogues and diamond-toothed drum machines. Titles like "Hostile Badtuna" and "Death 101" reflect Onyiah's famously dystopian outlook, and the programming behind them is no less unrelenting. Devil's fifth purchase edgy repetitions and stuttering snare rolls show that a decade before *James's* automated raves, they could be used to genuinely disruptive effect. While every song on *Balance Of Fear* sounds like a complaint, 1985's *Glass Domain EP* — reportedly the work of the late James Stinson's still anonymous Onyiah partner, issued in a pressing of 300 and playable or not — isn't afraid to crank a joke or two. Over tracks more stepped down and less abusive, the artist combines Techno's jerky rhythms to a loopy sufferer, brings a vocoded character out of the dust, and even plays with "Loser."

HAGEDORN 2/2

ONYX 10 13'

Right into a grinding, moxy low end that marks giraffe rock (what does this, days?). The opening track on Wolfgang Hagedorn's fourth release for Stuttgart's Onyx pulls together the

raided bombast of Electronic or T Ransomshire with the classic pump and chug of Kompat. The squally aspegees and unbridled throbbers squeals give it life, and while Hagedorn's leady rock adds a clattering House pattern, the remix leads the original's authentic quality. "Kiste Ein Bräuer" flows into a lazy glide flanked by lead chords and Rowell Fennell's clean, somewhat neurotic and Rave. And just when you wish for a bit more quirk, the chirping music boxes on "Shiver" offer just this. Prepped by audiophile-sized handpans and the hint of a breakfast, the tune coaxes Fennell out of hiding.

JUNIOR BOYS BIRTHDAY EP

KARNOOD 13'

At first blush, Hamilton, Ontario's Junior Boys — the drifting conglomeration of Jeremy Greenpan, Johnny Dark and engineer Matt Demian — bring to mind the English/German duo Cobra. Both groups use minimal electronics and breathy vocals to evoke the synthpop of New Order. Depeche Mode and Breakeast Beat, and both balance their music carefully between rhythmic riffs and empty space. But where Cobra's compositions expand, extending and looping. In this, these Junior Boys songs stick to a handful of chords that soak up more and more sound like sponges. Both "Birthday" and "Last Exit" pair quiet synth pop arpeggs with irregular rhythms suggestive of contemporary R&B; the array of very analogue tones highlights Greenpan's shadowy voice as though they're illuminating him in profile.

The most striking track here, though, is Christian Fennell's remix of "Last Exit," which sends Greenpan to the back of a reverse wind tunnel and sends the words right out of him. When they're turned up a notch or two, Fennell's dense voice plays a storm of feedback that converts songwriting impulses into a cyclone that threatens to tear up everything — car, house, roadway — until there's no way home but down.

KIM KING KONG EP

TIGERKUSH 15/10 13'

The duo of Rekim Lusk and Jim Bazzooka, Kim are one of the stranger acts on Paris's Tigerkush label. Their anguished *Myrjag* brought together Edm Part, Wase Stander, and Artyr Lusk with original Kim tracks to fashion a retro album that was part tape, part mash-up, part Fifth World party jam. On the *King Kong EP* the title track is a galar heavy, funk-punk rave-up in the vein of H1's "Me And Guillain", marked by byzantine synths and an organic reborn reminiscent of Hugh Masekela's 1984 LP "Don't Go Lose It Baby." On the B-side, Chicks Lay Andrew Meacham — working as Empire Machine — infusions the core of the piece into a beehive muddled on triplets formations, while ancient analogues synthesizers resemble the buzzing workers. For so discernible analog, Gun Chicks' rousing "Seabest" rounds out the EP.

THE MITGANG AUDIO THE VIEW FROM YOUR NEW HOME

SUNCOIN SUNC001 13'

New Yorker Ray Sweeten, of *The Planters*, makes synthpop, but just because it's synthpop doesn't mean there can't be surprises. The whipsack snare and whistling synth lead of "Binary Life" suggest Bonavent more readily than they do any of Bonavent's bawdy, while tunes like "Stellar Di Radio" reference Italy disco so faithfully that they're actually sung in Italian. Requests references to Speak And Spell's Odepeche Mode, Yoko and Alexander Robotack abound, but Sweeten's songwriting means that his tracks are always more from the heart of their appages. The wistful "Minor Cause" is a minor classic that lasses nothing in having come along two decades later, while "The Escape" and "The View From Your New Home" twist the baroque inclinations of Wendy Carlos. The only complaint is the muted quality of the sound throughout, leaving the songs as if heard through a gauzy smog. On the other hand, that only adds to the album's nostalgic feel.

GHISLAIN POIRIER CONFLITS

NFR, SHERIDAN 15/10 13'

The mixings in French, and as I don't speak the language I have no idea what the Montreal artist and his assorted MMs are saying. But that hasn't bothered me. Poirier's move from more contemplative microsound into dark, distorted HighPop sidesteps both bad tropes and the glitch for glitch's sake, preferring to use many digital devices. Layering vocals over brittle beats like live bees in a box full of nails and glue. Poirier and Saba, featured on one track, sound less like rappers than radio announcers spinning cryptic narratives at midnight. Poirier's beats and instrumental tracks, while minimalist sounds suggestive of rubber and stressed metal. A stand-up base can be traced to GI Kuch, a ribbon of dense recalls Cabaret Voltaire and glunking kalimba and tin roof percussion draw a line back to Poirier's African travels — as pure as when he assembled several CDs of West African HighPop nearly impossible to procure outside the region. Conflits traces this line of light of a musical form that refuses to be bound to any place or technology.

PI POOTERHOOTS BARF (LIEBE MEINE EP)

PROPHETIC PROPHET 15/10 13'

Safety Scissors — aka San Francisco's Matthew Cury — may have picked up some German during his extended sojourn in Berlin, but he sure didn't lose his penis sense of humor if he doesn't sign his cousin, Craig Dodge, aka PJ Pooterhoofs, in any indication. This is good news, even to listeners who might initially be put off by the word "BARF" in big, bold letters. The cover image, meanwhile, is a caricature of a cartoon character, Alf. Despite the throwaway quality of the joke, the music is inescapably in its right appealing attention. From "Liebe Meine Schwester" to "Liebe Mein Dirty Biscuit" to "Liebe Meine Dicks" this is a gilly disco break and salute it up with greasy nose

before marching it down the catwalk like a sultry supermodel wearing a family size serving of spaghetti on her head. It's kinky, embarrassing and hilarious. "Liebe Meine (Dicks)" is even funnier, rolling body elastic in music synths and slumped, distorted vocals. Somewhere, this is playing as the soundtrack to a fetish movie you hope you never see.

BRUNO PRONSATO READ_ME

ORAC-ORAC 13'

STRATEGY MARATHON HEIGHTS

ORAC-ORAC 13'

What goes? Dreamy Seattle isn't supposed to be particularly hip-rap. Even if you're taking that to Orac, which has in its webbed feet flapper that way into a strange new paddle where the waters of German label. Pronsato mingle with less obvious tendencies. On "Read Me," Bruno Pronato mangles a piano and then hammers all the samples into a long metal file where each scale is a different hue of silver; then multiplies unadorned female vocals snare it in a net that no one expects. "Silver City" offers more of the same, but with an underlying electro impulse that changes the mechanized paces to particularly hair-raising effect — made even more so on "Eight Frozen Modules" remix. Portland's Paul Strategy, Orac, meanwhile, leaves behind the dreamy reverb of his work for Kinley and Orac in favor of the monstrous, floppy "Marathon Heights," which ropes together Asian beats, half-cooked percussive samples and bad goofy House stabs, and then sends them rolling down the vinyl. As it descends, little riffs fuse into one massive blur of air and pine needles. The other three tracks are just as good, taking dance music into the wet wilderness and letting the elements have their way with it.

VARIOUS SUPERLONGEVITY 3

PERLON PERLON 15/10 13'

Germany's Perlone label continues to advance the argument that gray is the world's most versatile color on its third installment of the *Superlongevity* compilation series. While noise does find a million shades of gray — gunmetal, rose, ash, moss, pollen — is powdered, rolled and chopped like so many sweetmeats and served up in tins to House rhythms as brittle as compressed sugar. Narcotic Syria pulls the bang into a quick look while bungling a kung fu gong, Loberjany plays shuffleboard with nukes and gaudy, and Benjamin sends a grumbling monkey scurrying over eggshells, his bandages lapping in the breeze. Ricardo Villalobos deploys what might be his first touch of jazz with a lungey chord progression over wringing guitars and snare, while fellow Chilean descendant, Dancy Jack took out his globo Andros after ebs, prepping UR-knapped dance, accelerated IBM and jacking it-hot. Indeed, it might be the best thing he's ever released. The only real surprise here is how one label manages such a constant reinvention of House beats without slipping into self-parody. □

AL-HACA SOUND SYSTEM
INEVITABLE

CD/DVD: CHRONIC/CHRONIC CD

Bringing the gap between the recent excellent *Masterplan* album on Studiopeg and the more gassy roots outburst of *Rhythm & Sound*, this set comes out of Studiopeg's Vienna studio — whose fabulous "My Sound" collaboration of 2002 with the singer once called Tieman was a testament to the more mainstream dance audience. Al-Haca cast the net wide with inputs from dancehall king Sizzla and the more hardcore He-Man, although the "Killa" track is Mr. Dead's more rounded out mix of the Rastaman original, and the rapid street-fleety of fellow New York, RQMC, but the key vocal contributions come from different Drummer Sound System's own MC Tweek, who is now bespoken with the edited title "Rise".

Tweek's luminously virtuosic style sets him alongside Rias (Simon) Begbie in the super league of UK's top dub chanters. His far songs open the set and help define its sound and feel. The most compelling bassline comes from "Heartbeats", an advanced dub two stepper with added vocal verse from a certain Mr. V, albeit — I'm assured by those in the know — with lyrics percolating close to Port Berrin's Brix hit of the same name.

DIGIDUB FEATURING
RICO RODRIGUEZ
DAY 1/FOUND
CD/DVD: COPIE 101

As the scene, closely tracked tremors of Rico Rodriguez first up "Day 1", the unsuspecting might be fooled into anticipating a full-on ska rampage. But perverently the gears shift down, as a spongy bassline coming from a much deeper place plays the rhythm to heartbeat bass. It's another triumph for one of the UK's true dub auteurs. Lee Berek, who as Digidub has marked some of the more experimental excursions under dub's once conservative name. Since the early 90s, Digidub has unleashed such treats as "Purple Day" — about the dangers of laser excess — and the unforgettable "Scrap Bodies", the only dub album to my knowledge built from soundproof noise samples. This track returns to more traditional structures where Rico, who recently featured a Tony Barz giach ending session, is able to stretch and blow in that lay style's worthy but tedious bag band.

JUNIOR MURVIN
POLICE AND THIEVES DELUXE
EDITION

BLAND 440003/BLAND CD

Courtesy of The Clerk's cover of the title track and the patronage of producer Lee "Scotch" Perry this is the album that every a-punk cut their reggae toots on, the odd few being distilled into words from which they never stray. Incredibly this "deluxe" release is confined to the domestic US market and therefore only available as an import to those outside its borders. Before arriving at the Black

Ark, Junior Murvin first recorded in the early 1970s as Junior Soul for producers Sonia Pottinger and Dennis Hammet, establishing an early vocal debt to his hero Curtis Mayfield. In 1976, "Police and Thieves" became the biggest-selling Jamaican record of the year. Its theme fitted Scarab's naturally rebellious tendencies, while the lifting arrangement optimised the producer's newly found stylistic genius.

In 1977 it popularly began an album of the same name with a remarkably short batch of material, enhanced on this release by contemporaneous material either recorded as singles or destined for the sadly unissued follow-up. The track to delight both Murvin and dub fans is the unmissable "Memories", the rhythm of The Uniques' "Queen Majesty" (itself a Mayfield cover), as the singer rants rock bar with a glorious falsetto opening whose blinding effect lasts right through into the typically liquid Upsetter dub. Although Marvin went on to work with Joe Gibbs, Mikey Dread, Henry "Junjo" Lawes and Prince Jeremy, he never topped this, which is both his finest moment, and a landmark reggae album. And top sleazebags from Scotch biographer Dave Katz too.

TOMMY MCCOOK
BLAZING HORNS/TENOR IN
ROOTS

BLUCCO AND FIRE BAY0404 CD

Although other saxophonists in Jamaican music may have equalled him, the 1970s belonged to the towering presence of the great Kenny McCook. This twofers is the serendipitous result of the commercial imperative of tune recycling, as each of the paired albums features McCook riling on the rhythms of two of the most seriously deep producers in roots reggae — Vivian "Baby Boy" Jackson and Diannemore "The Goddess" Brown. Either of these albums could have come off as stand-alone releases, the two together almost amounts to overdone. Blazing Horns first appeared on Grove in 1976, the UK imprint run by King Solomon — one of the most off-key reggae soulists ever to voice a tune — with McCook and trumpeter Bobby Ellis interpreting some Baby Boy cuts as dub instrumentals.

Two years later came the Glen Brown album that was only ever available as a pre-release white label. The standout on Blazing Horns is the title track, which received a deserved emulsion treatment on a full dub. But if this were a clash, then Junior in Roots would win by a knockout. Although both sets include some classy excursions — versions of "When I Fall In Love" and "Yellow Bird" for starters — there's a missing sense of Glen Brown rhythms here that has since become recognized as stone classics, including the dolefully insistent extended version of "Lambis Bread", "Honey Meets Broom" (best known as when Prince Jacobo met Richard "Drity Harry" Hall in "Mr. Harry Shaw"), "Tubby's Corner" (aka Jacobo's much loved "Stoney" and "Tubby's Sea") (on the "Shawing" rhythm). In fairness, these two albums back to back amounts to a sax overdose, this twofers is still a must.

THE NEW AGE STEPPERS
THE NEW AGE STEPPERS

ON-U SOUND/REACT ON-UD CD

First issued in 1981, The New Age Steppers' debut here gets the full Japanese music treatment, with four extra tracks doing from that period. Which is strange, as On-U producer Adien Sherwood has usually denied the existence of such contemporaneous material. Could the explanation be that the tapes may have been in the possession of the label's in-house emcee figure, Mark Stewart? The clearcut New York to-ank sound of "May I" — albeit punctuated by flabby helicopter whining sounds — readily predates the soon-come workhorse of Stewart's unsurpassed masterpiece, *Learning to Cope With Cowardice*. A driving force behind the formation of NAS, one Arnette Foster aka Air Up is to let loose Frank Chickens-style on "Want Gardening", a melodic-mutant version of a melody seemingly chopped from "She'll Be Coming Round The Mountain When She Comes". But the real bonus here for On-U devotees is "Singing Love", a DJ version (Jah Wood?) of an Up's take on Bim Sherman's immortal "Love Forever", dubbed out in true punky rebel style. The totally cut, most constructive critique of the original artwork is recorded in a characteristically high-end Japanese production style.

U ROY WITH BOB MARLEY &
THE WAILERS
KINGSTON 12 SHUFFLE

TRAX ON WAX TOWNGH1110

Previously only available as separate tracks on the Upsetter section of the Jax label, the voluminous but exemplary multi disc retrospective of Bob Marley & The Wailers' pre-label output, the tune we know better as "Twickenham Rock" comes with the greatest of all DJ riling the rhythm and seeping in after the first vocal line. Well, perhaps not so much riling it as wrapping himself around it, pushing and pulling it, in the jazz style that was all his own, despite his legion of imitators. The A side comes with a Peter Tosh melodic version on the a-side dub, while the B side is a version of the original tune bearing one of Marley's most celebrated lyrics, "One good thing about music/When it hits you it never goes pain", followed by an old school Scotch popping dub. Collectable, unmissable, and still hot after all these years.

VARIOUS
SILENT SESSION DUB

THINNER 0029 MP3

Thinner is a German Net label distributing dub inspired electronic music in the form of MP3 files via thinnernet.com, and though the artists here are widespread throughout Europe, the feel is predominantly Northern. For the digitally educated, this may be just another genre of spot-the-presets at play in the processing of digital sound. But for the rest of us, digitaly challenged dub purists, as long as we can follow the massaging friendly downward instructions then the result turns out to be a rich

seam of gleefully cool glitchdub — all smooth, way surfaces, distinct promises and long, faintly ending.

Finally, a Master Jah's from Dortmund, who also contributes, as intimations. He's the dabob of cast with stretched, landscaped delays and wide wallops of reverb in "Nachtling" and "Pinningscape". Another creator of icy vocals, but more compositional in approach, is Antonio Elyus aka Seilfish from Riga, Latvia. "Studio Clock" proves his time as a chit character helped remove the fear of the human voice that appears to be common across the laptop generation. Bernese Bernese's "Falls" threatens to develop into an unknown House subgenre before pulling back from the brink. The standout track has got to be Off The Sky's "Non Linear Surface Verses" (Statis Varnity), even if for the title alone. Lag on and chill out.

VARIOUS
DYNAMIC
600X DYNAMIC

SONA JAZZ 600X CD/DP

Business as usual down in Soul jazz with a selection to make conservative reggae buffs choke on their chair. But who is to argue when the Percentage shows his shirt more than a quarter of a million units. Bringing tunes like "Fall Chalmers' production of Tall T And The Touthies" "Soundin' The President" and Alkaline, Hollow Point and Mr. Wally's postmodern dancehall version of Barrington Levy's "Under Mi Sensi" to reggaeans has got to be regarded as either a social service or an act of insurance. Roots vocals, DJS, mokatobay, not quite right! Fair, and early dancehall are all mixed into the pot without conscience. Reggae anthems such as "Tenor Sows" "Golden Horn", The Uniques' "Queen Majesty" and Baby Boy's "Concerning Love" live up to some secure but as less worthy cuts from Papa San, Prince Mohammed and Sator Nyan in the line of mix that only used to circulate on cassette.

VARIOUS
SOUNDS AND PRESSURE
VOLUME 5
PRESSURE SOUND/REACT CD

Pressure Sounds' occasional budget releases are clearly no more than a marketing tool to either capture newcomers or remind old reggae lads of their outstanding catalogue. This one opens with the beautiful Rasta plant-out-rads against organic religion and hypocrisy, Johnny Obourne's "Purify Your Heart", followed by Jah Spear's alarm stretched, vocalized dub version of "Spear Burning", dedicated to the revolutionary from when he denied his name: Jomo Kenyatta, the original Burning Spear. So it goes, a balance of dubs and dub-instruments, the highlights being Augustus Pablo's beautiful "Mountain View Dub (Version One)" and fellow melodic virtuoso Bobby Kingpat, with the woked "Counter Parade", weighed against some lesser known vocal output ranging from Bob Brooks, with "Rain From Bambi", to The Mighty Roots, with his musings on "Waterhouse". □

Electronica

Reviewed by Keith Moline

A GRAPE DOPE MISSING DOPE GILGARI SLUTT CD

While *Turbine* appeared to move away from overt staccato processing and editing on their last album *Standards*, drummer John Hordson's *A Grape Dope* solo project is an unassuming triumph of shy digital invention. As with his parent group, a close, comfortable embrace prevails, but there are sufficient twists and cuts to pull the rug from under the average listener's feet. Highlight: the noodle-spear beatbox intro and heady, suspended dissonance of "Red Hat Attack," which recalls Ken Kohn at his slowest beat and forms the perfect backdrop to a deliciously mystifying vocal from Antonio's Dese One, concerning car crashes, lamp posts and pigeons.

RHOW ARAI MIND EDIT LOAF BWO1 CD

Deeply balanced alchemist Arai sees his 1999 *Soup Deck* album resound on *Loaf*. A stolidly unimpeachable work, it rarely seeks to do more than cut and paste some meat and potatoes beats, which crutch away amiably over airless blocks of Rhodes, vinyls or gutter. On the rare occasions when he ventures beyond the usual pop show futurism, a medium of interest is aroused, as on "Platter" with its drilled Kildrum patterns and unsettling squeals and wails. Elsewhere, despite the pleasantly hands-on roughness of the edits, Arai seems less no ambition beyond providing a head-nodding soundtrack for sitting around, skimming up and not needing enough.

DONNA SUMMER VS OVE NAXX DONNA SUMMER VS OVE NAXX VIOLENT RUD TUN011 3CD

A brooklyn double-header featuring six tracks each from Brooklyn's Jasec Forest aka Donna Summer and Tokyo's Ove Naxx (real name Bob Saxe). The latter has worked with Matt Baiter, among others, and that group's kindergarten folklore is an ingredient on his portion of this disc. Saxe is a master craftsman of gleefully nasty dirt 'n' bass aesthetics, his million Playstations in a blender aesthetic; million Baiters even as it flaps them alive. The Donna Summer material inevitably sounds slightly muted by comparison, but there's a furious invention at work. Fansat while his breakneck beats and wild into a disco frog steam, a fiendishly hectic yet joyously stupid howdown.

DOORMOUSE THE METHOD/FREAKED OUT MESS VIOLENT RUD TUN011 3CD

DI and producer Dan Martin may not be able to spell "doormouse" but he shows himself to be capable of deploying the most savage of sportstrokes with aplomb. His latest collection *Method But Mess* is only tried, but as messes go it's as painstakingly cut and collaged as a Biquis canvas. Certainly the constant quips, self-conscious shifts and wacky interjections

start to pelt over the distance, but Doormouse has the funk even with all instruments set to reach factor 11, maintaining an infectious forward motion. Both "Bakewell" and "Tendons" are extraordinary in their intensity and inventiveness, and his crashing de-mix of "War Pigs," which manages to pay homage to the Black Sabbath original while blasting it to smithereens, has to be heard to be believed. As a bonus you get the casually great mix CD *The Method*, which cuts from The Art Ensemble through The Moxikos to Ponceau, while covering most of the more unassuming ground in between.

DOSH DOSH ANTICORN ADR0002 CD

Martin Dosh is the drummer and Rhodes player in Fog and this issue of his solo debut cuts that group's low key loopylogy into a rimecheck mark, which passes as the Anticon signature sound. Unusually breaks and live beats and single stately piano and guitar figures, with an array of wheezing toy keyboards and soft analog sound scapes provide a gritty melancholy doer. It manages to avoid blandish and lose shriek by the strength and grace of its themes and arrangements. Dosh's interventions and experiments add another dimension of textual perspective to the highly organic mix rather than drawing attention to themselves as prominent events in the sonic narrative.

JAGJAZZIST DAY NIXIA TUNE ZENCD003 CD

Lifted from their current *Nixia* tune album *The Six*, the lead track on the first CD single is a sunbaked headrush of spiraling melody and backbeat beats. Get this for the three bonus tracks. The dreamy "Two Wings" has high-tech trademark instrumental/electronic balance towards the latter with its twisting, skittering melodies. Matthew Herbert, that other purveyor of big band electronica, dips in with a "gender mix" of "Days," which would make perfect sense accompanying time lapse film of sprouting vegetation. Best of all is an astonishing deconstruction of "Reminders" by DAT Politics, which folds, layers and generally chews over the original's happy sad melodrama before abruptly and willfully suppressing under the filigree atmospheres with nude seas of glitch noise.

ROEL MEELKOP FAVORITES VS./ARCHIEF VS03 CD+LP

The V2 *Archief* label purveys provocative newsworks by the likes of Mowton, Francesco López and Bernhard Glatzer; and the compelling CD plus LP package from Goem's Roel Meelkop is a fine addition to the catalogue. Favorites is apparently a remix or "assimilation" of his desert island discs (only for the LP dig for the CD), but you won't be playing *Alarme* *Time* with Meelkop. Although softening the snarl and burn of many of his labelmates, featuring instead lowercase explorations into static, hiss and hum, this is nevertheless extreme music, if it is music

at all. What is beyond question is that Meelkop is a huge talent. He has an uncanny ability to transform the most beamed of signals into a gripping sound narrative by means of a patiently applied art to editing and juxtaposition.

MICHAUX %20 AUDIO NL 099 CD

Detroit's electronica poster boy and New Wave signing Jimmy Edgar has his hand at dials + cuts minimalist and the results, though superficially impressive, fail to transcend the generic end results of using Max/MSP software. There is no doubting his programming flair. His miserably obese and confident pluses him firmly in the lineage of Doctor Gigs like Carl Craig and Juan Adams, but whereas those early Motor City madonnas sounded intoxicated with the heated spaces they were discovering between the bleeps and beats, Edgar's work sounds complacent, even smug. He comes over as a glacially Powertek Yngve Malmsteen, all flash and so fits. He immediately programmed beat notions lead a tastefully conservative selection of modish squeaks, paps and eledrotrons, which ultimately ring very hollow indeed.

NO 9 WHERE COME FROM? AND WHERE TO? LOCMST AS CD

Tokyo's Joe Tokoyaki casts himself as a peripheral player in the groundbreaking ongo scene, but this taster for his forthcoming album as No 9 is far from the revolutionary experience suggested by his chosen moniker. Nevertheless, the lead track is a cuts and clatter cleptomaniac carter that cuts brushed steel and double bass samples into mired up snippets of what sounds like the same polyphonic break chattering that Major Galaxy dropped in and out of Gary's "Sunshine Day And Night." Indeed, the track shares the same careless breeziness and loose sexually two-faced mood provide further interest. Disciples in Music's Blunk K Brown provides eight minutes of submachine drk, while the version by Keith Fullerton Whitman aka Hivemilk is jaw-droppingly auralistic. It's as if he's taken the music apart and dropped the pieces from different heights to monitor their varying bounce rates. Funny, fascinating and utterly baffling.

PIANA SNOW BIRD HAPPY HAP001 CD

On this debut from Naoko Sasaki, aka Piana, connections are forged between the seemingly disparate fields of glitch processing and joy-j-pop. Coming across as a child's sketchbook or diary, there is a palpable sense of nostalgia in these lovely acrop, powerful and moving weasoms of a kid's world that yearn to be torn from the taster to the joyful to the fearful. Boasting triple melodies as slow motion Sals-like chord of parents, empowering parno, organic, ecological broken beats and beautifully measured guitar from Yachiro Iwatsuka, Sasaki then distills

the music by adding a low key firework display of static pops and hisses which serves as a brilliantly effective metaphor for a child's sense of wonder, distress, excitement and awe. The songs recall both the unsettling, rather complete of Pop-Off! bewilder and Corbeau Twiss at their heartstopping best.

RECHORD SKOKOLL AUDIO NL 099 CD

In *The Wire* 257 a somewhat disillusioned Ian Penman bemoaned the Powertek homogeneity of current electronica. Certainly this new album on Audio.nl by the Swedish Anders Tillander, who has also recorded for Mille Plateaux, is a product of the times — and there's a lot of it still afloat — but the willingness of these elects explores to engage with notions of noise and non-noise, brutal externity and sound on the edge of silence, rather than bow down to dancefloor imperatives or Head Music ubiquity, is surely to be applauded. In any case, Tillander is no slave to the city, grey orthodoxies of the snap, crackle 'n' fizz, there's a wider palette employed here, one that finds room for discrete weeder pads and warm dub effects amid the warmer clicks and buzzes.

TU MU' AND THE MAGICAL MYSTERY ORCHESTRA REBORN ALB001 CD

On their latest album, the prolific Italian duo of Rossano Poldoro and Emilio Rannelli cut and layer shimmering loops of their own 'secret orchestras', the music's textual sensuality and panoramic expansiveness setting it apart from the stiletty of most post-digital glitch output. Stranded unfurled by the ghosts, shadows and refractors thrown up by their 'lapses', *Tu e' Reborn* a variety of ethereal soundscapes over the album's 64 minutes, from the Steve Reichian "Glasnost" to the baking, crumbling pieces of "Bye." Despite the serenity of the duo's processes, the lush sonorities of the 'orchestras' throw through like rays of sunlight reflected in mirror shards.

XIU XIU KNIFE PLAY TUNE TON010 CD

An extraordinary album for a number of good reasons and, unfortunately, a larger number of bad ones. *Knife Play* outdoes even The Cure's *Idolism* Pornography as the ultimate in comic Goth nihilism. Possessed of perhaps the most mannered voice ever recorded, leader Jamie Stewart over erases on a set of fascinating balke lyrics, employing an unruly "Scott Walker meets Perry Farrell" croak/sneer. Nevertheless, it's a product of genuine white-knuckle ambition which is actually quite compelling in spite of, or perhaps because of, its astoundingly self-conscious pretensions. There's beauty and power here, over-egged certainly in something of a 1990s Bowie way, but clever and original in its choppo and layering of real and processed sound. □

HipHop

Reviewed by Dave Tompkins

BLAQ POET A MESSAGE FROM POET

If anything, it's remarkable that Blaq Poet (Neil Rowland, or just 'Piet') is still able to rap and cut solo today, having been the first and only to ever score just one on record. On his late 80s "21 All Hail's Breaking Loose", Poet also had the wretched balls to call the same phlegm. Poet had his best moment on 1987's "Beat You Down", where he went from Marley-toy to calling NIS a assly 16 years and a Scoreball album later (79), he returns with Di Premier to take inventory on the Hot 97 beat, that's kind of over though probably not when he's the idea of being palestinian. Premier's songs recall the skunking Gator Home days while DMA, Ja Rule, Nas, 50, Jay-Z, everybody gets named in a 'v'man guys' kind of way. Not that anyone cares whether Joname Dope and Dae are getting along. Like my older high school tennis coach once said when he broke up a fight: "I thought they was dancing".

EXPRESS RISING MUSIC FROM COUP

Dante Carfagne slipped up some bird record and came up with a "Long bellied, olive black, bay breasted, rusty crowned, grey beaked, black throated humming warbler", a generic warbler that flies kind of funny and makes bird watchers swear off the Old Crow As Express Rising. Carfagne notes all the solemn, wet leaf details. A grey day is fairly other than depressing — reason to stay in and make dope beats. Full of collectible organic and denture rattling drums, it's the best (and probably saddest)

instrumental album of the year. Inspired by a woman betrayed by a big cloud in her car, "Cedar Chest" has a whiff of Kansas City cocaine beated to biotic roots. (Cedar Chest is also a de-clicking tool for mastering records). There's piano in a midwest basement, a song about a dead maid and haze within a cigarette but called a "Chalky". You're being dropped off in the Midwest hounds where these records were found, landing on a hard porch with enough bass to fall right through to the cedar "ice

Stopped" is a theme for returning to a dead loved one's house and opening some windows. At out the ghosts and sort through some shit.

DI FRANE PRESENTS ELECTRIC GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS OR BEATS TO BLAZE TO VOL 2 CITY MASSIVE CMG CO-OP

Weeded instrumental HipHop is a dime a doze-off but credit Frane for squeezing the most from his Frog & Toad Are Friends record, especially "Frog & Toad In The Garden". It's the same garden with a bird head of laughing lettuce from that episode of Milt's Happening, the one named Ralph that Find Re-Run R/P Benny worshipped when he joined the cult of Babarombeba. Frane gets the Golden Garden Clay for using "Planet, Cowboy", though without Dae's aiger jaggy. We call on to the Sylver's "Folk's Paradise", an area from "Mommy What's A Fyskadelic?" and some steep beats, still trading around in 1987. But there's always Frog and Toad. And goddamn I love Frog and Toad. The swampy stacks, the beaded spots jackets, the big-ass watercolorful lens. "Yes," said Frog. "It is very nice. But it was hard work."

DI SIGNIFY WINTER'S GOING (FEATURING BUCK 65) LUX 12"

On his first CD *Mixed Messages* Signify messaged around with Car's epic "Halloweath" while his artwork pictured a locomotive beamed down on a robot bike. "Baby, it's you and me behind the car," nips a voice into the bottom of his whiskey glass. Signify sets up Buck 65 with a troubled acoustic guitar and the latter dips into one of these relationships that never leave the apartment. Hearing sign: she had a little on him. Another hearing sign: it cloud swallowed the sun and the hard hand adventure". So they did what anyone else would do. "Unscrewed ourselves and made up new identities". Once Buck's a gone, Signify lets the track spin itself for a while with a glint of ham and string figments. The intro to "Five Leaves Left" recalls that Satin with bad reception from Carpenter's Prince Of Darkness.

STEINSKI'S BURNING OUT OF CONTROL THE SUGARHILL MIX ANTIQUOTE ANTSQUID CO

"This's the joint" is so damn dizzy Maybe it's Sha Rock's voice to the way the rest of the Funk 4 Sha shed his voice. Or the night balls on their Lee down jackets. Steinski has his way with the Sugar Hill catalogue and his theme is fire because the Sugar Hill offices in Englewood, Jersey burned down, maybe not as well known as the fire that claimed Lee Akinde's jazz collection or the ones that latched the Bronx for insurance, inadvertently leading to "The Message" (antecedent but not appearing here). A Dear Furious Five moment (besides "Scopes"), the second greatest woozer joint ever) is the late Cowboy Frog snap chant at the end of "Freedom", the one you imagined going on and on (like you know it did when they recorded it live), his voice resonating so bowlegged dead, backed by nothing but a crowd and the Five's patented diaphragm-defying groans. And Steinski's never even lifted the tracks alone, a drum rattle here, a funny Prince Paul drop there and Di Signify whining along the way. Of course, Stein floats in some pre-Sugarhill Fly moments, allowing "Superstition" to run rampant in its right inside glory line, really it just can't be stopped. The vocoder in West St Mob's Breakdown-Electro Boogie always makes you jump back, a distorted personal space invader causing the poetry giftified to roll her eyes and repeatedly threaten, "I'm going home", though she never does because she, like us, really doesn't want to leave this party

THEMSELVES THE NO MUSIC OF AIFFS MUSH-NO NUMBER CO-OP

In 1995, Dase Adam Drucker Dne appeared in *Roll* magazine joggling in purple leotards alongside his cat Purple. Di stage in 2003, he played with Michael Sembello's "Warner" and does a leotardier jog in concrete place, his Ronald McDonald hair on fire, red dye bleeding into his white suit. A scuzzed guitar microphone leads to his woozering, which launches this remix thing with "Error Fabulous". As always, there's a lot going through his sinuses. A dead harmony catwalks that "its become dead cat hair," while the Florence spokesman makes "a

modest proposal on bones". On this same album, Hood fires up the nose generator for "Loving" while Dase roars for the Mad Minute Math Club, pinning on the sailor pompadour. Toughest button of his calculator watch-the-fuck-out. Scope Dope (Machine Gun Mervin) looks "Oh Neenango" into some beaked kid's shoe theme banned from TV. Fog's "Darkside" is straight up bent HipHop art someone starts eating the skin of their fingers. Scariest remix goes to The Network's "Out In The Open" as Dase scowls under a guitar drone pushing through bad memories. You could aim a stackback fish in his mouth and that cat would roar out the nosebone.

VARIOUS ORIGINAL STYLE NEW STARS NISBETH CO-OP

In search of the perfect high after smoking banana peels and sucking helium, Gamme Some Rey visits Bubba Fats at the top of an icy mountain and demands, "tell me where the real stuff is or I'll kill your guru ass". South Bronx Movement says "tell us How The Power", Rey learns to get high on himself and Bubba is left alone talking to the dark for another 10,000 years. And there's 11 from just as good Tracy 168 did the cover set of the double LP of impossible to find Old School goodies, each with its the discolors (one word) guitar and bawly allowed rhythmic sections paid in peanuts and pop. Missy Dae & The Melody Crow deserve the spotlight, or at least their names written in demands on their denim jackets. De "Million Dollar Legs", Pumpkin lends a funky arrangement to Connecticut's Outlaw Flow, who offer to buy everybody partyphone. On his pre-school anthem "Get Up" Little Peckay Blow says come your hair and how some hot cultural and then busts into a waxy knee slide. The Jackson Hawk about longed into the "bitch" pages while the guy from the Rocking Bedboard Connection is listed in the dictionary like celebrates the invention of the steele and says, "It's like getting in the party with a grizzly bear". Dwayne Fly Isaac could just chant her name for eight minutes and we'd be fine. But she's shy enough to make they get tonsorial. "Use Kasek without a bumpy bean that's how I am without a stereo." □

Wadada Leo Smith & Anthony Braxton Organic Resonance (Pi06)



First ever duo recording by these two masters
Consists of compositions by both Wadada and Braxton

Art Ensemble of Chicago The Meeting (Pi07)



First new recording with Joseph Jarman in ten years
"This is music as it can only be made by the AEC"
—Don Cherry

Liberty Ellman Tactiles (Pi08) (forthcoming release)



With special guest Greg Osby
"...absorbing, challenging music from a guitarist who is keen to transcend cliché. Definitely a name to watch." —Jazzwise, UK

Vijay Iyer & Mike Ladd In What Language? (Pi09) (forthcoming release)



Experimental jazz composer Vijay Iyer and poet/hip-hop producer Mike Ladd collaborate on a genre-defying song cycle about people in transit at an international airport.

Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by Julian Cowley

BOSETTI/DONEDA/RAINEY PLACES DANS L'AIR

NATCHO 1998 CD

New England sax anatomist Boi Rainei meets hard spirits Alessandro Bosetti and Michel Doneda in Toulouse to wrinkle out from three aspirin horns sounds that might be incidental, unintended, superficial or plain unwanted in commercially expressive playing. Avoidance of the obvious, addressed through the course of a continuous 42 minute improvisation to a restrained language of nuance and whisper, oblique trails and fleeting traces require considerable self-discipline and the will to suppress ingrained tendencies and automatic responses identifying who plays what and when may conceivably be possible but its scarcity worthwhile given the music's cumulative air of self-effacement. The sparse stream of punts, bells, pops and ghastly exclamations assumes the character of collective meditative practice, shedding outline and familiar features to seek out more refined forms of control, recognition and discovery, between themselves and in relation to the idiosyncrasies of the stark performance space, Les Errés-Peas.

PETER BRÖTZMANN & SHOJI HANO

FUNNY RAT

IMPVISED MUSIC FROM JAPAN 1995 CD

Funny Rat was recorded live in Japan in 1991 and first appeared as an Egg Records cassette issue in 1992. A six minute track has been added to this release, which comes in a sturdy gatefold sleeve depicting the two sturdy performers. Shoji Hano's mission is to drum, and that suits Peter Brötzmann's gregarious temperament just fine: skip the noises and slug it out. Hano's direct and emphatic approach to the kit in practice produces series of complex polyrhythms projected with unusual focus as well as force. Brötzmann's exuberant lung power finds release through tenor saxophone, bass clarinet and the pained readiness of the Hungarian tenorists, occasionally in ferocious headlong blasts, far more often in skewed textual probes and slanted sheets of rough-cut garrulousness. Once you're acquainted with the Brötzmann orientation here's not a musician who offers many fundamental surprises, but he's always worth waiting for the guaranteed incendiary risk and his dogged resistance to the banalities of finesse.

CONTROL R WORKSHOP MISSING

KOD NO NUMBER LP

Formed in 1990, Control R Workshop is guitarist Daren Kay and Ralfi Sutherland doubling saxophone and bongo. For the 2001 Californian local radio station broadcast documented on this vinyl self-release they were joined by percussionist Kessel Crockett. The first of the four tracks is a primitive edge driving assepe over bowed cymbals, with either an unrecorded violin attack or overpowering mimicry by alto guitar. The third track also incorporates a drone, a gentler affair of rubbed strings and drums with muted

moaning from Sutherland's sax. The remaining improvisations rely heavily upon sax sizz, electric guitar assemblage and angry exclamations from Crockett at the kit. The sweeping sweep of the sax sound is the essence of its appeal, as it coagulates and thins, knots and frays.

D'AGARO/GLERUM/BENNINK STRANDJUTTERS

NATCHO 1998 CD

CLUSONE 3 TRIO CLUSONE

NATCHO 1998 CD

Italian mezzosoprano Danielle D'Agaro is clearly steeped in a rich mantle of jazz history, and the tang, sweetness and savour of a wide range of resources favour his clarinet and tenor saxophone playing. Instead of being overpowered by influential individuals, however, his approach is permeated by more abstracted qualities of elegance and daring. Having said that, in his clarinet playing on "Ein Plein Air" and elsewhere, D'Agaro unmistakably acknowledges a major source of inspiration in the cool elegance and sometimes reckless daring of Jimmy Giuffrè. D'Agaro's music is too good to engage in prolonged same-chasing. Bassist Ernst Glerum and drummer Han Bennink - on his best behaviour - show fully D'Agaro's ability to grant the musical part a contemporary function that sidesteps revisionism and jettisons nostalgia in favour of edge of the moment excitement or gracefulness. Even the melting contours of the Mercer Ellington composition that closes cannot be a sign of unexpected pugnacity.

Clusone 3, Bennink's alliance with clarinet and about Michel Moore and cellist Ernst Reijnders, is a comparable outfit. On this relaxed and hugely enjoyable 1991 Geneva festival recording, originals mingle with artistically morphed pieces by the likes of Herbie Hancock, Hermeto Pascoal. Bennink's last of Miralé persons is more in evidence here, and Moore and Reijnders, both capable of gnat point as displayed on the mezzosoprano's own "Dabbe Werdet", let loose some wild energy of their own at times. But their mischief never appears disrespectful towards material they've borrowed.

JEAN DEROME LE MAGASIN DU TISSU

AMERICAN RECORDS 1998 CD

For Le Magasin Du Tissu (The Fabric Shop), Canadian musician Jean Derome augments his usual saxophones and flutes with a suitcase packed with little acoustic instruments, modest resources, found, recycled or invented, including sticks, metal harps, tuning forks, whistles, pipes and humming coils. He approaches this instrumental collection as an acoustic sampler enabling him to assemble short bursts of sounds mostly unsuitable for extended soloing but cohesively effectively to this tediously varied, multicoloured patchwork. Derome also views the recording as a catalogue of sounds with which the double bassist clearly relishes. Gina Robert plays percussion, Nya Massimo 17 and 21 string kotos. Robert is both a subtle colourist and highly skilled in musical architectures, displaying sensitivity to space and pace that tends to his

CDs of samples was made and played together in shuffle mode, producing one realisation among potentially infinite.

DUNMALL/ROGERS/NORTON RYLICKOLM: FOR YOUR PLEASURE

CMP 1998 CD

Earlier this year English visitors Paul Dunmall and Paul Rogers teamed up for an American tour with Kevin Norton, a drummer and vibraphone player who has worked extensively with Anthony Braxton. In May in New York State they recorded this excellent set of three improvisations, with Dunmall on tenor and soprano saxophones and Rogers playing his ALL base, a six-stringed instrument with a dozen additional sympathetic strings. Rogers locustates in the extended range, audibly exhausted with exploration of a fertile extra dimension of expressive options. Dunmall's plain-speaking yet distinctly anchored articulations flourish in the session's unhurried, accommodating climate, stretching out over a full half-hour on the final track without slackening the concentration of his phrasing. Norton meshes in notably with the floating overtones of his vibes and adds luminosity to the sonic spectrum; his drumming is attentive, opening out the sound rather than driving it. Ryllickolm, allegedly, is a southern English colloquialism for celebration.

GOOD FOR COWS LESS THAN OR EQUAL TO FREE PORCINE SOCIETY 1998 CD

The view is partial and painted by hand, deftly appropriate in the time-honoured manner of delectations of creative independence. Correspondingly appropriate by commercial pressures, the music of Good For Cows is a refreshingly well-defined, carefully executed and richly detailed series of melodic searches. Bassist Glen Hoff, of the New China Stringers carries the tunes with agility, bellow and playing, drummer Chas Smith, from Theory of Rain, keeps the metric pace and the punctuation pointed as he skilfully juggles multi-genre rhythmic schemes. It's tempting to envisage further instrumentation being imported into the session - riling horns, a vintage Onuma Coleman solo, even improved rock guitar and keyboards, the duo provide solid basis for various kinds of magnificent elaboration. On the other hand, it's easy enough to appreciate the stripped down pleasures and self-sufficiency of these acoustic duum 'n' base tracks. Hoff and Smith's distilled musicianship makes Less Than Or Equal 10 well worth the effort of seeking out.

KOWALL/MASAOKA/ROBAIR ILLUMINATIONS (SEVERAL VIEWS)

NASTASCAN BR9904 CD

These 16 concise statements form another welcome addition to Peter Kowall's posthumous discography with an instrumental line-up that the double bassist clearly relished. Gina Robert plays percussion, Nya Massimo 17 and 21 string kotos. Robert is both a subtle colourist and highly skilled in musical architectures, displaying sensitivity to space and pace that tends to his

compositional training with teachers like Lou Harrison and David Rosenbloom, as well as percussion studies with advanced practitioners such as Eddie Prussner, and William Winslow. Masaoka, who studied composition with Akih Curren and whose varied playing contexts have included collaboration with Pharoah Sanders and a lot with Fred Frith and Tom Cora, is based, like Robert, in San Francisco's artistic riverscape Bay Area. Her solo sound is both bright and soft, combining an implication with false delicacy, and her playing is melodically sinuous. Kowall's lasting expertise is evident in his characteristic adaptability and inventiveness with regard to the bassist's role as well as to the bass's capabilities.

EVAN PARKER & SEPTEMBER WINDS ALDER BROOK

LEO 1999 CD

Evan Parker's incisive compassion to enter musical environments that require him to adjust or reconfigure firmly established and highly refined performance techniques here brings him into the orbit of Peter A. Schmidt, a Swiss player of deep regard needs with a taste for reverberant spaces. An earlier encounter, documented across three CDs from Swiss Creative Works, found them in an empty water cistern as a duo. The current heard in various combinations on the 11 tracks of Alder Brook was recorded in a church in September 2002. Jörg Schillingman plays saxophones, Reto Stein clarinets, Hans Arlin trombone. Resonant architecture outlives slow music, with time to listen a necessity to fend off tingled edginess. Parker's signature silences react rapidly on tenor and soprano is cautiously chambered or held in check, and it's intriguing to hear a small group recording where his distinctive and performative presence does not automatically become the music's fulcrum. September Winds are remarkable showers of sound, poems in hollow air, and Parker responds to their craft and judgment. The centrepiece "Cinghiali" is a duet between Schmidt and Parker strutting on the tubax, a newly developed contrabass saxophone.

JOHN SURMAN FREE AND EQUAL

ECM 1999 CD

John Surman's early urge to prominence on baritone and soprano with Mike Westbrook, John McLaughlin and with The Twisted Ones into a solo career that he cut a distinctive course across the international jazz landscape, consolidating his reputation while testing options that he allowed his remarkable voice tributes of further development. Work with brass ensembles has been an option. Free And Equal, inspired by the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights and best performed during the 2001 Metzfest Festival at Queen Elizabeth Hall, locates that assertive duo against steadily arrangements for the ten piece London Brass. The ensemble are ceremonial and the individual voices effusive, making for some precious transitions low and apart, but substance outweighs formality and Surman's asking tends, still, to be wonderful. □

Modern Composition

Reviewed by Art Lange

ANDRÉ BOUCOURECHLIEV COMPLETE MUSIC FOR STRING QUARTET

ECM ACC30102 CD

A contemporary of Pierre Boulez, Boucourechliev first came to prominence in the 1950s with text compositions exploring electronics and musique concrète procedures, but it was his series of late 80s albums, entitled *Archeol*, that cemented his position on the international New Music scene. Featured here, *Archeol I* (1968) provides the musicians with unconnected "islands" of isolated material (scouring figures, sustained pitches, percussive harmonics, thematic fragments), but they must plot their own course through the score, working either in complementary directions or in cross purposes. The accounts for the music's occasionally turbulent but never totally disruptive ambience in the 1970s. Boucourechliev rediscovered Beethoven and the influence of his late quartets is immediately apparent in the traditionally notated *Musor 2* (1989) and *Quatuor I* (1994). However, those motivations are filtered through bits of Alban Berg and Bela Bartók, as well as Boucourechliev's own feelings about the idiom in these later works, through phrase fragmentations, textural transparency, dynamic extremes, redefined instrumental interaction (rather than mark, scenery and lyrical prose). The *YoYo Quartet* owe this music.

JOHN CAGE/HERBERT HENCK LOCATIONS

ECM NEW SERIES 124543 CD

Composer and critic Virgil Thomson acutely gauged the existing internal preparation and sometimes structural properties of John Cage's *Sonatas And Intervals For Prepared Piano* (1946-48) with his accurate declaration, "a ring, qualified by a 'ring.' This is the disquieted, restless, contradictory, 'X' of *Wolfgang*" or "X Love Supreme," its popularity is result of "easy on the ear" exclamation and the prepared piano's percussive bang. Herbert Henck's performance alternates between a crisp rhythmic fit and languorous atmosphere, and he is unafraid to throw in dynamic jolts and alarming attitudes, highlighting the gamelan resonances while finding lyrical cores in its minimal motifs.

The second disc contains Henck's own *Festbeleger Fantasien*, two suites of piano improvisations, some from 1953, the rest from 2000. Occasionally misjudging a second prepared instrument to — as Cage liked to say — "fracture the plot," Henck pounds out best notes, swirls glissando, splashes chords, accented notes, rhythmic and rippling filigree passages — all in the first six minutes. At its most adventurous, Henck's harmonic language hovers around early Scriabin, but mostly his extravagant gestures evoke a 21st century List.

JOAN GUINJOAN MAGMA

HARMONIA MUNDI HMN99700 CD

Masterful at manipulating colour and texture, Catalan composer Joan Guinjoan gives an exceptionally large palette from midsize chamber

ensembles (in the case, members of Projecta Gerard), and is unafraid to include noise elements, like the shrieks and extended string techniques of *Allegria* or the huge arsenal of percussive instruments in the *Sanctus* and *Adagio* influenced *Monnaie* or *Carmina*. The five works on this disc were recorded at his 70th birthday concert in 2001 and illustrate his desire to stabilize fact into form. Typically, the musical perspective is continually shifting — individual instruments bubble up on an elusive mix of chromatic harmonies and jangling rhythms or several briefly coalesce, building momentum, before dissolving into fluid masses. Guinjoan's music has at times been compared to Ives, possibly because of the moments of clashing polyphonic intensity and harmonic focus, possibly because of his use of nonchordal notation and controlled improvisation. But his scores contain evidence of a personal approach to the organization of sound, one that is cohesive and yet unpredictable.

HANS-JOACHIM HESPOS SOLO WORKS 68-96

ECM 9669902 CD

Free jazz is as over now oceans subside in the aggressive score by the German composer Hespos (*Quint 1938*), and the ensemble finds its way to the most subtle solo piece — a nightmare ambience of instrumental muzzling and dashing indeeds poignantly titled *Zu...*. — Is dedicated to Albert Ayler (Everything from A to Z, get it?) His music is an existential protest, employing derision, dissonance and antagonism to break through barriers of complacency. This is manifested in extended techniques "on the borders of playability" and an attitude of urgency that occasionally cannot be contained within an instrument, and so finds its outlet in vocal groans and shouts. Also like free jazz, Hespos' music is not necessarily more recognizable plots but reveals itself through dramatic contrasts of energy and emptiness. These include the all but inaudible overtones of the alto flute rising to visible scores in *Quint* (1980), the Spanish guitar's Derek Bailey-like duels and dissonant phrases in *Quint* (1971), and in *Splash* (1969), the responsive clarity of the drums and acoustic bass gradually erupting into snare and gob tactics. The irony underlying Hespos's music, emphasized by *Pour l'Art* is exacting interpretations, is that for all its grit, exacting accordance, it ultimately lacks the spirit of true spontaneity.

GYÖRGY KURTAG SIGNS, GAMES AND MESSAGES

ECM NEW SERIES 124530 CD

This remarkable Hungarian composer's music is about essences, necessities and enigmas, and the disc contains three characteristically concise, terse, terse works. The *Händel*-inspired (*1953-97*) attach a haunting lyricism to the natural breath and speech patterns — with occasional expressive outbursts — at an unaccompanied baritone voice, and the result is a 'pure', understated account of the poet's grief

and search for peace, in "Im Walde", Kurtag's connection to Gustav Mahler in subject and tone is striking. The 19 song solos and trio that comprise the ongoing *Sigms, Games And Messages* with a free line between private meaning and artistic significance. Attempting to communicate without artifice, these brief reconstructions of mood nevertheless make musical sense through statemental tone, allusions, riddles and gestures. The isolation, stark majesty and introspective poignancy of Samuel Beckett's writing echo Kurtag's musical epigrams, so the song cycle — pass a pass — suite part... (1998-98), with its vocal textures, acoustics, forms of percussion and strings that suggest swirls of light in dark passages, illuminates the same creases of sensibility, which are as allusive of life.

ALVIN LUCIER NAVIGATIONS/SMALL WAVES

ECM 124 CD

Since the late 1980s when he was a co-founder of The Sonic Arts Union, Alvin Lucier has been exploring the microscopic components of sound, environmental acoustics, human hearing perception and natural acoustic phenomena. *Navigations For String* (1991) grow out of his study of audible atmospheric tones. The *Arctic Quartet* gradually composes a fast note melody and (spanning a minor third) down to a single pitch through very imperceptible melismatic intervals, producing a subtle, buzzing, complement of rhythmic beats in the process. In *Small Waves* (1997), the *Arctic*, plus trombones Roland Delhaye, must align and react to alter their pitches with and against feedback tones created by inserting microphones into bottles and jars partly filled with water, while pianist Wolfgang Rieck outlines the feedback's harmonic core. Dynamic modulations occur over time, and surprising consonant harmonies and both-gilding dissonances emerge and recede. At nearly an hour in length, *Small Waves* has the concentrated focus and nearly static progress of a late Feldman piece, though deriving from a distinctive combination of science and aesthetics.

MEL POWELL SETTINGS

ECM NEW SERIES 124530 CD

A jazz prodigy turned Pulitzer prize-winning composer, Mel Powell (1923-98) devoted his own post-Schoenberg methodology, constructing modular components based upon 'tableaux' of 12 tones spread over four differing intervals and registers. Free from the constraints of thematic or harmonic development, his music has an air of spontaneously balanced by precision and enlivened with feral rhythms. This programme, designed to show off his close relationship with the California EAR Unit, features compact, songlike pieces for solo instruments, offering melody, albeit angular continuity and varying mood — contemplative calm, buoyant life, belated piano, alienating slipperiness and spiky vitality, and witty poignancy respectively — framed by two ensemble works. The first, *Seest*

(1996), starts with a clamor checks hard not to hear as a tongue-in-cheek reference to Powell's former employer Benny Goodman, leading to sharp and slow out contrapuntal group movements. The second, *Memories for chamber ensemble* with tape (1967), finds the six live performers enveloped in a dense sound of vintage 60s synthesized spurts and drones.

CHRISTIAN WOLFF COMPLETE WORKS FOR VIOLIN & PIANO

ECM 129 CD

From the 1950s to now, much of Christian Wolff's delicate and unromantic music has been fashioned as opportunities for visible interaction between the performers, who must make choices that affect their musical relationship as well as shape the composition itself. In the notes to this release he suggests that the *Duo For Violin And Piano* (1961) becomes a conversation, as each instrumentalist follows their own chart of possible events that ultimately influence, but cannot totally control, one another. That the two versions played by the *Sabat/Craker Duo* (nearly six and more than 17 minutes long, respectively) share the same mood and character — sparse, yet remains in a tense environment — confirm the composer's presence amid the unpredictable proceedings. In the more expansive, more thoroughly notated *Phobias* (1959), the instruments converse in whispers and forthright statements, at times interrupting and continuing the others' point, and occasionally agreeing to sing together. Their material, from simple diatonic fragments of unrecognizable folk songs to small, jagged chromatic contours, may be brief or poignant but it's the commitment of the performers that counts.

JOHN ZORN CHIMERAS

ECM 127005 CD

Phenetic *Baden* once said he drew Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* because it swings with Chimeras. Zorn spins off that classic score's instrumentation, howling at the moon lunacy and mathematical gamesmanship to show off his own Second Viennese School chops. In one sense, it's a typical Zorn exercise similar to his *Omne* (Say Y's Say) and hard box (News For Lulu) excursions, exaggerating some of the details without damaging the model — for example, pushing the soprano's vocal line toward harsh screaming or jazz scat, or adding a touch of Gorb with an unexpected organ. But what's with that wild machine? Working convincingly with the 12 tone format (actually 11, since he omits one pitch per movement as a compositional constraint) Zorn denies flamboyant, often sardonic allegories that mix and match the participants so that no two movements have the same colours or textures. The hot-notch performers rise to the challenge and as a result the music cascades with electric textures with time for money contours should note the disc lasts just over 30 minutes, but it's all a chimera anyway, right? □

Outer Limits

Reviewed by David Keenan

ALVARIUS B & DYLAN NYOUKIS SUGAR: THE OTHER WHITE MOUNTAIN CASPARI PLATE CPRO13 LP

As two of the newest sub-underground operatives ever to come on tape, Alvarius B. and Dylan Nyoukis, one half of the UK's Deeper Pinge, are an inspired match. *Sugar: The Other White Mountain* is their debut took-up, a beautiful limited edition LP with a hand silk-screened sleeve that showcases both of their working strategies to complementary effect. Bishop contributes a handful of his Fourth World stoned ballads, with soaked distorts of mangling acoustic guitar and moaning vocals accompanying plenty of full beat poetry and acoustic-derived imagery.

The overall feel is extremely disorienting and schizophrenic, as foreign television broadcasts and radio transmissions seep from the background, merging with Bishop's sound forms to undermine and distort their meaning. The first side ends with a rough assemblage from Nyoukis, with stark loops of rusty bongo converging with the woe of a spoken tale and drop cuts of unidentifiable activity. The second side is a collaboration proper, 24 minutes of some shrouded-derived tone, straggled diaphanous entrances and campfire percussion, enlivened by the heave and twang of rickshacked folk instruments.

WILLIAM BASINSKI A RED SCORE IN TILE THREE PORPUS 10 LP

When Christoph Heinemann first visited William Basinski at his home in Brooklyn last year, he asked him to play him the first piece he ever recorded that he was completely happy with. It was *A Red Score* in a loop-based tape composition from 1979 that was named after a painting by James Elton. Similar in atmosphere to Basinski's affecting *Disintegration Loops* series, *A Red Score* in Tile is based around a minimal, slow-weeping piano part that feels as if it's being broadcast through a thick fog, as single notes fall in slow motion and distant bass tones and logarithmic rise are behind them. The feeling is of something lost at sea, or in time, something that never fully reveals its shape, as the same evocative pattern rolls in and out across two barely changing sides, before once more withdrawing into the depths. As with all of Basinski's work, it's exquisitely melancholic.

FAMILY UNDERGROUND FUCK, LOVE OR WILD ECSTATIC REACTIONS INFO THE LUNAR NIGHT NOCD

Formerly known as FLOWER, this mystery unit uses two basses, guitar, organ, flute and voice to generate reverb-soaked tunnels of drenched Co-Magnum power which recall the zoned-out vibe of the No Wave 13 and the original Amen Dilla, while reaching relatively towards some drug-dimmed hazy with huge lumbering steps. In the way they build intensely peaking chimes from circular percussive patterns and puffs of breath,

they recall the trance-inducing strategies of the UK's Visceral Cathedral Orchestra, but Fuck, Love Or Wild Ecstatic Reactions is cut through with a burning black abyss that is totally its own, a diaphanous intimacy that speaks of endless space, all enveloping darkness and the moorland play of shadows. Word is that there's a CD due on Jackie-D Motherlucker's U-Sound imprint some time soon, but in the meantime this more than fills the gap.

GLANDS OF EXTERNAL SECRETION/DEACER PINGA TUBULAR BELLS SECRETION/DEACER PINGA CO 10 LP

Recorded back to back with *Faust IV* at Virgin's Master Studios in 1973, New Orleans' Tubular Bells rapidly became a lightning rod for hippy sophists the world over. Deacy heads, determined to prove that popular Progressive music could be every bit as smart as its classical twin, would point to its exactly sophisticated nature as proof of its seamless while horror fans recoiled at the opening bars due to their exploitation on the soundtrack to *The Exorcist*. It remains one of the most pompous albums to come out of that whole inflated era inspired by Didi's many attempts to rectify what he sees as the album's technical deficiencies – tape hiss, wagnerian timing, clunky interaction – with actors. Glands Of External Secretion, aka Seymour Glass and Barbara Manning, and Deacy Pinga, aka Dylan Nyoukis and Ders Dill, decided to re-interpret the whole thing using no 'real' instruments and an aesthetic that only embraces these kinds of destructive accidents.

The first side is given over to the Glands' gaming deconstruction, a clarity mess that does beautiful violence to Didi's art and aesthetic, with Manning replacing the Starchick's monologue with a list of some of the class derogatory used to put the others together. But it's the Deacy Pinga side that best stands up to repeated spins. One of their most gorgeous creations, they take the cakewalk "light" of the original and stretch them across phantom atmospheres while heavenly flows of butterfly electronics and ululating strings (the latter courtesy of guest player Neil Campbell of Visceral Cathedral's *Dejection*) combine in a damaged hymn to destruction.

IZITITZ LUCKY BIRD SOUNDATIONS SOUNDATIONS CO

ZASHIKI-WARASHI FLOOR CHIL CONDUIT CREATIONS 0040405 2XCD

The third release from NKKK satellites IZITITZ, Lucky Bird is structured as a cartoon mythic tale based around the odyssey of a drummer – that looks suspiciously like Axiom from *The Muppets* – in his search for a mythic beat of Cuban jute hidden in a paper bag. At points the music, drawn from live blowouts at NKKK's Warehouse and the Ecstatic Void Collective, orbits the more cerebral end of European improvisation, with bassist Matthew Heron's scolding energy mugged wire to allow Rik Moah's horn and Jereva Duncan's trumpet access to some singularly

oblique tonal regions, without losing their connection to the narrative drive. But it's Carter Thornton's guitar that animates the disc somewhere beyond the reach of established jazz strategy, leaving off now licks that tug like balloons and linear ruminations that make play of sonic sense while remaining melodically obscure.

For an ever deeper pass through Thornton's idiosyncratic soundworld you need Zashiki-Warashi's *Floor Chil*, a double CD of live jams, street noise, drones and found sonarities assembled by Thornton and featuring members of NKKK, IZITITZ, Alex Slaughter and Test.

JAR IN THEORY AND PRACTICE COSMOSIC GROWTH INDUSTRIES COBIO CD

Jar are a UK-based three-piece who work simple gritty loops and keyboard parts into circular devices that reference early Cluster, Faust disc "Knutrock", and patches of the first two Coil albums. "Head To Eye" features a mutant vocal that could almost be David Tibet of Current 93 over reedy synth generated strings, scattershot electric percussion and a squelching palisade effect. Elsewhere the landscape is increasingly featureless, as on "Iku Have Borrowed Words You Do Not Understand", which sounds like a wind up UFO landing down in some apocalyptically belted paper-mache landscape. Although most of the sound sources are slightly generic, on the whole it works, lending the performances a rudimentary charm. In *Theory And Practice* was originally issued in 2001 and this new edition comes in a wordless, silver-sprayed jewel case.

CHARLIE MCALISTER DEATH WATER STATES CASPARI PLATE CPRO14 CD

Since the late 80s Charlie McAlister has recorded several hundred cassette albums, using no concrete assemblage, stand-up goats, damaged radio plays, skewed field recordings and tautly stretched pup strings, all made available by his Flannel Barjo label. From 1994-95 he cut four particularly deranged and revered titles, *Suburban Beachdown*, *Southern Promenade*, *Porch Party*, *Rain Pure Egg Roll Bomb Pans* and *Hare Fun The Summer*. For *Death Water States*, he has been persuaded to go back through these sessions, selecting his favorite tracks and pasting them into one non-stop tape. McAlister is a present-day exemplar of his scrupulously banjo and guitar work at points recalls Eugene Chadbourne, but it's the surrounding sonic environment that most maintains interest, a lo-fi bombardment of manipulated voices, found sounds, industrial clank, radio jingles and other effluvia broadcast that, along with the surreal beat of his lyrics, compels to paint a convincing snapshot of a working bear under siege in America.

JIM O'ROURKE SCEND THREE POLARIS LP

Assembled from field recordings collected between February and April 1992, *Scend* was originally released by the Chicago label Dreded

in an edition of 500 later that same year. For this restored version, O'Rourke has revisited the tapes, reworking and tightening the pieces up, while Christoph Heinemann is as adept at the packaging, exploring on views first posted by the original. Using subtly treated recordings of water, traffic and what sounds like a distant children's playground, O'Rourke assembles a series of dead-end narratives that are as ambiguous and open to conflicting interpretation as Peter Christopoulos's frequently troubling tape work with Throbbing Glottis. The whole piece is beautifully recorded, full of elaborate sonic detail, and O'Rourke's foregrounding of environmental sound over faraway voices gives both sides a weird, alienated quality that feels disconcertingly comforting.

RH BAND 12.27.01 11P CYCLOPUS NO NUMBER LP

The first broadcast from this Californian trio is a few years now. 12.27.01 pulses with hallucinatory electronic tones, as warm analogue tones feed swollen, meandering structures that vibrate with ominous frequencies before dissolving into seen coils and distress signals. Although taking cues from the early hypnagogic work of Italoalo Nourmands like Targemine Dream and Klaus Schulze, *12.27.01* sheds any remnants of rock form in favor of pure singing tone, abandoning co-ordinates and any sense of linear development and instead concentrating on dense sensory immersion. Side two is something else entirely: a throbbing, serpentine drone that's as tactile as any conjured by Le Monde Young, extrapolated to infinity with wisp tones and vapour trails. Played loud enough it's as physically affecting as composed Maryanne Amacher's disconcertingly evasive "third ear" inventions.

VIRGIN EYE BLOOD BROTHERS RECORDED LIVE IN THE DEEPEST HOLE IN LOUISVILLE ARBITRARY SIGNS NO NUMBER CD

Healing from Louisville, Kentucky, Virgin Eye Blood Brothers consists of Peter Nolan and Kiti Aplemair, a duo of multi-instrumentalists with connections to subterranean outlets like Double Leopards and Son Of Earth-Flesh On Bone Ties. Live In The Deepest Hole... is their debut release, a document of an all-improvised subterranean action that opens with a bang of clattering metal percussion before giving way to the kind of atonal head-banging melange of augmented horns and electronics that made Throbbing Glottis's live *Heathen Earth* recording sound so aggressively felt. But there's a much more elemental feel to Virgin Eye's conceptions, their sound soaked in mud and soil, and when the tumult dies down and the duo start to work tributaries of sparse electric guitar into the molten flow, they strike a seam that's rich with restless forms, reminding crossroad poets and flannel-belted folk that exists with centuries of accumulated resonance. The whole deal comes beautifully packaged, hand sewn into a screened card envelope. □

Print Run

New music books: devoured, dissected, dissed



Attack of the jocko horror Devo

ARE WE NOT MEN? WE ARE DEVO! JADE DELLINGER & DAVID GIFFELS

SAT. MAR. 23

BY EDWIN POUNCEY

Depending on which side of the critical fence you were standing at the time, 70s art rock group Devo from Akron, Ohio were either "The band of the future", as David Bowie famously declared in 1977, or a shallow music industry novelty that had as much to do with rock 'n' roll as The Archies or The Banana Splits. Attired in a variety of identical costumes that ranged from their early yellow industrial boiler suits and black "soccad cowboy" outfits, to their later, much mocked "flowerpot hat incarnation, Devo's dadaist attack and anarchic humor was completely alien to the ongoing punk rock movement that the music media had then perceived to be the way forward. But as Henry Rollins of Black Flag would later proclaim: "There are just two kinds of people: those who get Devo, and those who don't." Jade Dellinger and David Giffels, who co-authored the first official Devo biography, clearly belong to the former category.

Their book is an extensively researched history

of the group from their earliest stirrings in the early 70s, when founders Jerry Casale and Mark Mothersbaugh joined forces, to their final collapse in the mid-80s when, after a series of uneven albums and over-ambitious projects, the now mechanical sounding Devo finally ground to a halt. *Are We Not Men?* also serves as a useful history of the Ohio and Cleveland punk scene, touching on groups like Pez Ubu, The Dead Boys, The B-52s, Rubber City Rebels, Tin Huey, The Waitresses and Oh G! However, it's the mostly untold story of Devo's beginnings that makes this book so fascinating. Largely drawing on original interview material with principal members Casale and Mothersbaugh, Dellinger and Giffels not only explore the group's origins, they also explain how Devo developed the mysterious theory of d-evolution and eventually captured the imagination of an army of fans.

Devo formed early musical influences such as Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker and The Rolling Stones, whose "I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" hit they famously imitated, with watching Lewis' TV horror host Ghoulardi on Cleveland's WKYC Channel 8, where they saw influential 30s B-movie *The Island Of Lost Souls*. Here we learn that their spellbound obsession with potatoes evolved from Mothersbaugh's

childhood tinkering with a Mr Potato Head toy. But the group ultimately formed their global manifesto from the discovery of two important texts. From the first, Dr EH Sheldrake's eccentric anti-Darwinian pamphlet *Jocko-Homo* Heavenbound, Devo d-evolved their name, together with the title of their first single "Jocko Homo". The group's other bible was oddball anthropologist Oscar Kula Maerli's obscure *The Beginning Was The End*, which put forward the theory that man evolved from a species of cannibalistic, brain-eating apes. This book supplied the impetus for the short film *The Beginning Was The End*—the *Truth About De-evolution*, which they used to show before they went onstage. After enlisting their younger brothers (both called Bob) and drummer Alan Myers, Casale and Mothersbaugh took Devo on the road, relocated from Akron to California, signed the group to Virgin Records for the UK and Warner Brothers in the US, and went into the studio with Eno as producer to record their first album.

Devo's initial encounter with Virgin founder Robert Branson mirrored the sleazy openness of the 70s music business. Flying Mark Mothersbaugh and Bob Casale to Jamaica, the record company mogul told them he had plans

to hook Johnny Rotten up with Devo and promote them as the next Sex Pistols. With Rotten waiting in an adjoining room for their answer and the music press huddled outside ready to capture the moment for next week's front page, Mothersbaugh and Casale politely declined Branson's offer and took the next plane home. The Devo story is full of just such strange encounters with the rock hierarchy. Neil Young, whose title "Rust Never Sleeps" was originally suggested through Mothersbaugh's alter ego Bob) Bay, kept Pop, David Bowie and William Burroughs, who wrote a proposed lyric for Devo in the shape of a poem called "Pick Up Sticks" that was sadly never used.

Eventually Devo demagogued to concentrate on solo projects. Mark Mothersbaugh, for instance, has since become a successful film and TV composer. But *Are We Not Men?* is primarily about the Devo legacy of at least four significant albums and the series of stunning experimental videos that gave this subversive group MTV star status. At the height of their powers Devo were an example of art and industry coming together to produce a unique musical hybrid. Dellinger's and Giffels's balanced history captures this perfectly and urges you to listen to Devo afresh. □



Man out of time: Mick Drake

THE PEOPLE'S MUSIC: SELECTED JOURNALISM IAN MACDONALD

PUBLICO PRK \$19.95

BY TOM PERCHARD

This anthology, published in summer just a few weeks before Ian MacDonald committed suicide, collects rock journalism the author published in the later years of his life. MacDonald had a successful early '70s stint at the NME and a recent career writing for *Uncut* and *Mojo*, and the music covered here reflects that arc. Beginning with Bob Dylan and The Beatles, the author stretches to David Bowie and debuts through Motown, Bob Marley and Miles Davis. This is familiar territory shared by several high-profile writers, Charles Shaar Murray being the most prominent. But MacDonald's range was wide, and between leaving NME and his 1994 *Revolution in the Head*—which many believe to be the best extended treatment of the Beatles' music yet written—MacDonald devoted much of his time to Shostakovich scholarship. In whatever context, context was all for MacDonald, and rather than trying to overwhelm with style, he was writing always sought to historicize and integrate.

The most vital journalism of any kind often fails to stand up when ripped from its daily context, and anthologies—so is a volume of journalism about history justified? Dry if the retrospection

surprises, and MacDonald's does. With a mixture of respect and insolence, not to mention an eye for the absurd, MacDonald dissects a few sacred cows. Marvin Gaye's legend is debunked, the singer charged with spreading a creative taper across swathes of his career, Jerry Bruce is downgraded from all-time revolutionary to a figure of "immoderate topicality", big-time minimalists like Steve Reich and Philip Glass are derided as chances marketing a sellable thing to audiences of philistines. Meanwhile, more respectful pieces revisit the author's work on The Beatles, exploring the craftsmanship ethic that established Lennon and McCartney as the pre-eminent songwriters of the early 1960s, and then the group's discovery of LSD and "love".

Three long essays stand out from the book's bulk of reviews (of, among others, Jimi Hendrix, The Band and Laura Nyro), beginning with the opening piece's 40-page examination of Bob Dylan. Or rather, what MacDonald identifies as the two Bob Dylans: the first, pre-electric, was a project of discernment, a persona "as invented as Ziggy Stardust" that courted clarity of identity, opacity of aim, misanthropy about its part. This Dylan, MacDonald suggests, embraced music and warms, while the other Dylan—an older, drinker, and almost evangelical artist—made it his mission to disabuse his audience of their lives' contradictions and hypocrisies. MacDonald

borrows Henry Miller's phrase to describe Dylan's post-electric project as one "to inoculate the world with disillusionment".

The title essay might refer to one of the best serious socio-historical studies of jazz, Sidney Finkelstein's 1948 *Jazz: A People's Music*. Certainly the piece is cast in a vaguely sociological mold, and it reads more like Simon Frith or Brian Auger than anything else. But MacDonald was neither an academic nor a theorist, and while that's a compliment rather than an accusation, this central essay takes on airs of academicism—footnotes and Latinate language—that its poor logic and cloudy judgment can't justify. Here he attempts to chart the early 60s rupture that, he claims, unsettled the music industry power of its pan-ethnic hacks, managers and record companies, while empowering a young audience to influence changes in products and markets. The thesis is solid enough, but before (and, it turns out, instead of) introducing any kind of empirical evidence to justify it, the author goes off on an aesthetic tangent: this rupture, he asserts, occurred at pop's greatest artistic moment, and it's been downhill ever since. MacDonald refuses to accept that music like *Mythos* have taken the world-changing place of his pop, which he perceives as a universal constant rather than historical accident. But like any other, that music represents a time of discovery and convergence

among a limited society and class of musicians and audiences—no short-lived flourishing of an ethnic art, just live bebop, or the classical style.

The collection's last piece is an appropriately wandering rumination on that most background-bound of artists, Mick Drake. Read now, it's easy to understand the deep empathy with which the author charts Drake's doomed trajectory from melancholic to properly all-around beyond that. Though, MacDonald's real concern is to reconstruct Drake's symbolic world: the musician's contemplative preoccupation with the Blakean (super)natural is aligned with ideas, characters and experiences from the musician's own life and biography. MacDonald closes the book by suggesting that Drake's Zen-like perception of natural presence challenges a modern lifestyle driven by money and clock-time. It's a powerful idea, even if the author never acknowledges that the ability to wonder at an aesthetic attitude only available to a privileged few, those secure enough either materially or psychologically. Given MacDonald's own lack of the latter, that can't really remain a criticism, instead an acknowledgement of an evocation of which the author must have been acutely aware. Throughout the collection, such evocations are overpowered by insight. As a closing piece, MacDonald's writing on Drake is a fitting tribute to a troubled mind. □



Leave gender out of it: My Bloody Valentine as psychedelic wonderkind

TURN ON YOUR MIND

JIM DEROGATIS

HILL LEONARD PINK \$19.95

BY DAVID KEEHAN

Essentially an updated and retitled edition of DeRogatis's 1996 book, *Kaleidoscope Eyes: Psychedelic Rock From The 60s To The 90s*, *Turn On Your Mind* is a staggeringly well-headed mess of best of lists, spurious genealogy, fawning interview transcripts, second-hand opinions, superficial overviews and hilarious wistful tear-pais, all rendered in a style best described as drooping incredulity.

Here he is on Moby's *We Are All Made Of Stars*: "Moby describes it as an uplifting and romantic ditty that also happens to address quantum physics and the robot fist, since 98 percent of the matter in the universe is composed of hydrogen and helium forged in the furnaces of the cosmos, we are literally all made of stars." And before you even have time to ask just what exactly a section on Moby is doing in a book that purportedly sets out to chart the history of psychedelic rock, he comes straight back at you with his penetrating excavation of Madonna's doozy "Ray of Light": "The lyrics reflect her embrace of Kabbalah, a form of Jewish mysticism then trendy in Hollywood — 'She's got herself a little piece of heaven/Walking for the time when/Earth shall be as one', she sang in the great psychedelic-dragon tradition."

Then again, for DeRogatis everything is psychedelic. In the first chapter, "My White Bicycle", he runs through a dry dotted history of

the synthesis of LSD and its subsequent colonisation of bohemia and rock 'n' roll, before going on to establish a series of stylistic tropes that mark out a piece of music as being truly psychedelic. He initially narrows that: psychedelic is generally identifiable by its syncretistic qualities, its non-linear approach to structure and its use of hallucinatory FX and layers of deep sonic detail in order to replicate the triebending properties of LSD. So far so good, but inch by inch the recent visions, eventually opening the floodgates to Madonna and Moby with a vague acrobatic musing that "Psychedelic rock doesn't mean 'drug rock', but rock that is inspired by a philosophical approach implied by the literal meanings of 'psychedelic' as 'mind-revealing' and 'self-manifesting'". And with that vague dispensation, DeRogatis perceives subcultural soul singers/southern, hysterical soul skaters and anyone who has ever featured on the cover of Q magazine to be broadcasting via their third eye.

Along the way he credits psychedelia with emancipating women, flagging up Grace Slick, Maureen Taurer and, er, Christine McVie and Rose Simpson from The Incredible String Band as if they were the first female rock performers ever to mess it up on stage. By telling that to Amanda Jackson. But then he decides back on himself ("I double back on myself all the time" he shrugs in the intro, directly telling him how he would be model and subject of his first biography, Lester Bangs) and complains that, unlike "Bob Dylan", women in "psychedelic guitar

bands" never made an issue of being female. Lush (!) and My Bloody Valentine, he claims, "had already gotten past the point where it was considered an issue." The women in these bands were equal, creative members — not "female rockers", but rockers, period? So, not psychedelic rockers either. Perhaps rock was the frame of liberation, regardless of whether it could be loosely characterised as psychedelic?

And then comes the final qualification: "If God, however you define it, can indeed be found everywhere, why set in three chords and a backbeat?" And with that the subtitle of the book, *Four Decades Of Greer Psychoelectric Rock*, is effectively out the window, redefined to the point of meaninglessness, leaving DeRogatis free to compile a list of his favourite records, complete with dull potted biographies and hilariously arbitrary charts like "The Original Influence Of Psychedelic Thought In Pop Culture", which entries for "bungee jumping", "casinos", "lobsters" and "hula hoops".

On first generation psych he is hazy and predictable, falling back on direct lifts from the mouth of Bangs; and he's completely off the mark when he's forced to get it alone with value judgments on more contemporary material. One of the most embarrassing sections in a virtual compendium of humbug is his attempt at a narrative, anecdotal dialogue with Glastonbury Dead biographer and publisher Dennis McNally when he takes the hazy-eyed old Velvet versus Dead argument down whole new kale de sac. Concluding about their Cabaret/Cage fixation, he maintains that The Dead were at their best as

an R&B group, while stepping them down with the claim that "The Velvet Underground during the same period was incorporating Karlheinz Stockhausen and La Monte Young and Dorete Coleman". Needless to say, DeRogatis doesn't even try to support his pat assertion with an explanation of how Stockhausen or Dorete Coleman actually manifested themselves in the Velvet's music. The book is full of just such mindlessly sugartasted diaries. His chapter on Krautrock is even starker, full of dubious one-line overviews that highlight a basic lack of knowledge of his primary texts.

This extended edition does reach further into the contemporary underground, and DeRogatis manages to sniff out modern manifestations of the psychedelic ethos in the Terrestrial scene and groups like Barrio Pono — only to bundle them with mundane, spirit-crushing condemnations like Dase and Blue. But most damning is his failure to pick up on the current Japanese psychedelic underground, the only place in the world right now where the ideas first posited by West Coast psychedelic stormtroopers like The Grateful Dead, Quicksilver Messenger Service and Mad River are being actively worked through and ceremoniously extrapolated.

"You're not going to experience life unless you completely surrender to failure," Wilco's Jeff Tweedy tells DeRogatis in the book's closing paragraph, and DeRogatis runs with it. "There are words to live by," he trumpets. "And they are a psychedelic philosophy if ever there was one." And by that reckoning even a dud like *Turn On Your Mind* is a psychedelic experience. □



Experiencing heavy turbulence: Jefferson Airplane in the Haight, 1967

GET A REVOLUTION! THE TURBULENT FLIGHT OF JEFFERSON AIRPLANE

JEFF TAMARKIN

ATRA BOOKS HBK \$27

BY DAVID MANDL

They may be better at hiding it, but the rich and famous have the same stupid problems as the rest of us — bigger ones in the case of Jefferson Airplane. At one time the royal family of San Francisco's 1960s Haight-Ashbury scene, their surface glamour and real status as peace and love ambassadors were shadowed by innumerable lawsuits, failed marriages, massive abuse of alcohol (that most bourgeois 1950s drug) and constant internal squabbles. In *Get A Revolution! The Turbulent Flight Of Jefferson Airplane*, longtime Airplane documenter Jeff Tamarkin calls upon years of in-depth interviews with the group and its extended family to draw the most complete picture yet of the glories

high, little-known lows and inner workings of San Francisco's most volatile band.

In stark contrast to their colleagues The Grateful Dead, the Airplane weren't always the communal peaceniks they were assumed to be. While the famous *Airplane Maniax* at 2400 Fulton Street often found itself beset by sirens, squatters and druggies, the group's tolerance for these pests had definite limits. Commenting on an incident where a couple of members chased some unruly rowdies from their roof with pellet pistols, drummer Spencer Dryden remarked, "We all had guns. We weren't hippies. Hippies were the kids who lived on the streets down on Haight-Ashbury." Notoriously roody guitarist Paul Kantner wasn't exactly the touchy-feely type either. When a member of the Airplane's entourage approached him for support during a bad acid experience, Kantner turned her away. "Don't tell me your bare tits," he snapped.

Whether because of her legendary drinking

bouts or her reverendizing rebellion against her staid upper middle class upbringing, Grace Slick was capable of just about anything. When she wasn't pulling her dress up over her head in response to a taunt from an audience member — she wasn't wearing anything underneath — she was donning blackface for a television appearance or naming her solo album *Manhole* just to bag feminists. "Women were always bugging me about women's liberation," she said, "so I was being satirical and just calling myself a cunt." The group sold into fashions and fought incessantly while singer Marty Balin, ridiculed for his insistence on writing sappy love songs, called them were, naturally, innumerable drug buns.

There were, of course, pressures and tensions — not to mention copious into-group sex — case made for great art, and, at their peak, the Airplane deserved every gold record they earned between the years 1965 and 1969, the pop transmuted smoothly from semi-electric folkies,

to psychedelic Jenny Holmeseeds, to avant-garde "studio as instrument" experimentalists, to the street politicians of "Up against the wall, motherfucker!" Their sincerity during this last phase has been the subject of debate but even given their ambiguous politics, there's no reason to doubt that they meant it at the time. If they had cut after Volkmere, they'd still have left behind one of the 60s' greatest rock legacies. They didn't, unfortunately, and for the sake of completeness, Tamarkin also draws us through the many ups and downs of the group's unspeakable 80s manifestations.

It would be inaccurate and grossly unfair to treat Jefferson Airplane as one of a dozen interchangeable hippy relics from the Bay Area's 60s heyday. They were, musically and lyrically, among the most progressive groups of their day and along with its behind the scenes dirt, Tamarkin's book is by far the best history of their achievements. □

SEEKING THE SOUL: THE MUSIC OF ALFRED SCHNITKE

GEORGE ODAM (EDITOR)

ASHGATE PNB + CD £20

BY ANDY HAMILTON

Alfred Schnittke became a student at the Moscow Conservatory in 1953, the year Stalin died, and benefited from the Khrushchev thaw. During the 1960s he began to become known in both the Soviet Union and the West.

Economic necessity forced him to turn to composing for film, since the Soviet authorities frequently blocked performances of his concert music. In the *Beethoven era*, it was considered too dangerous to be performed freely, and the premiere of his *First Symphony* in 1974 took place not in Moscow but in Gorky, a city closed to foreigners, and the work was performed only once in the next decade. He was not allowed to make a trip to the West until 1977, and then as a performer not a composer. Schnittke eventually made a good living from his concert music, managing to get his own family apartment where he could compose without having to endure the glare of the TV — his father-in-law, clearly no friend of contemporary music, was an ice hockey fanatic.

His postmodern polytextualism, often regarded as

an eclectic plundering of Baroque and classical styles, emerged in the 1970s. It's easy to trace this development to a continuing desire to identify his mother tongue beyond the ethnic minority known as the Volga Germans, and it is an archaic-sounding idiom reminiscent of 18th century German.

But as Schnittke commented, "Although I don't have any Russian blood, I am tied to Russia. Like any German fanaticalist, I can speak and write Russian far better than German..." [And] my Jewish half gives me no peace." In his final decade he developed a very austere late style, closely connected with the fact that in 1985 he suffered the first of a series of strokes that eventually killed him in 1998.

There haven't been many books on Schnittke in any language, and there are only two titles in English, including Alexander Hainke's excellent biography published by Phaidon. This is the first collection of articles on the composer, and though short — only 80 pages — it is worthwhile, and the inclusion of a CD justifies the price. The first article "Schnittke And Shadow Sounds," by Ronald Wetzman, argues that "shadow sounds" is a more apt designation for what is usually described as polytextualism. Both terms were coined by Schnittke, but even after reading Wetzman's article, the concept remains elusive.

Shadow sounds are, the composer wrote, "a new, illusory sound-space... we don't perceive them consciously but we listen in on them unawares." Perhaps what Schnittke has in mind is captured by comments he made on the music of his near-contemporary Arvo Pärt, whom he revered without wanting to imitate: "One can give music a certain illusory dependence on time... [Pärt's] music that originates in a quasi 16th century but actually there never was such music then. It now appears as if it were old music... But it is composed today."

Maria Kotsakova, writing on Schnittke's "new political mythology," argues that "polytextism" is not a collage or pastiche technique but an attempt to evoke diverse musical languages. It's often alarming to discover that the alleged uniformity of popular music was for Schnittke, as it was for Adorno, a symbol of totalitarianism — a hysterical view which Kotsakova goes along with, citing Marilyn Manson's identification with the Antichrist and commenting blithely that "Schnittke's ideas regarding the relationship between pop culture and evil are valid... for post-industrial society as a whole." This sounds like a crazy Russian was made worse by a bad translation. Other articles include "Nikolai Schnittke And Gustav Mahler" by Georg Borchardt, which traces the decisive influence of

Mahler, and a discussion of Schnittke's Second Violin Sonata by Paul Westwood.

But the most informative contribution, I found, is Maria Kivenski on "The Interpretation Of Schnittke's Piano Pieces." Schnittke studied piano and reached a high level of mastery, yet in later years considered himself a poor pianist, and Kivenski argues that many of the technical difficulties of his piano music result from unadmitted writing for the instrument — but then many contemporary composers would agree that "pianistic" writing is inherently conservative.

The Piano Quartet from 1968 is a line of vision on a fragment by the youthful Mahler for the same chamber forces, and it appears on the CD included with the book, along with two other works from the same decade, his *Voices Concerto* and *String Trio*. The trio, with its melancholy take on the "Happy Birthday" melody, gets a rather measured, restrained performance from The Acacia Trio — but then there's a case for not playing Schnittke to the expressionist bit like Rostropovich and friends on the ENI recording. Their interpretation of the Piano Quartet, with almost his Beethovenian fervor, is more intense in contrast. These are three of the finest works by a very great and heroic composer. □

Cross Platform

Sound in other media. This month: David Stubbs ponders the proximity between art and advertising in music videos by Chris Cunningham, Michel Gondry and Spike Jonze



Chris Cunningham's video for Björk's "All Is Full Of Love" (left), and DVD stills by Michel Gondry (middle column) and Spike Jonze (right)

It's a truism that video has been the death of modern music. By the late 80s, remakes like "Have you seen the latest Paula Abdul single?" were commonplace. The effects of video culture, especially as disseminated through MTV, have been pernicious. By allowing only a single visual interpretation of a piece of pop music, videos have precluded the infinite possibilities of alternatives in the minds of listeners. No more dreaming. The prohibitive cost of making videos, with the high production values demanded by the hegemony of MTV/VH-1, etc., means that record companies are likely to be more risk-averse when taking on new artists. Furthermore, there's been a dangerous merging of the visual language of pop/rock videos and advertising – film makers Chris Cunningham, Michel Gondry, and Spike Jonze are all implicated in this. They've all done ads. And bloody good ads at that, damn them.

Since video as marketing tool has effectively become the medium, you can conclude that video has been responsible for the death of rock and pop music as counter-culture, or at least the hope that it might have amounted to such a thing. So I approach these DVDs with narrowed eyes, grizzled and begrudgingly, hating myself a little for those frequent moments when I'm completely won over by them. The level of technical competence and innovation, the feats of morphing and lateral imaginative leaps displayed in these videos is generally breathtaking; the takes on old genres (70s TV programmes, kids' shows, etc.) is savagely affectionate, exposing the prevideo era as an Age of Innocence and embarrassing guffiness. But it's a case of artfulness minus the Art, or soul for that matter – postmodernism at its shinniest, embossed and postmodern. The intelligence at work here is frightening, but so too, often, is the sense of purposelessness, other than to excite that remark, on which there should be a lengthy moratorium. "How cool is that?"

Michel Gondry (*The Work Of Director Michel Gondry*, Director's Label 5990419 DVD) is perhaps the most engaging, also the least subversive of these three directors. He introduces his own DVD with a re-

enactment of an awards ceremony at which he "stiffed". A drummer with his own group, Our Oui, whose fetchingly infarble videos are included on this collection, he first got his break working with Björk. She's also a client of Jonze and Cunningham, incidentally, but she has a particular affinity with Gondry, as an interview in the documentary *I've Been 12 Forever* suggests. He directed "Human Behaviour" and "Army Of Me" among others, both of which are synergistic exercises in what you might call formidable whimsy. It's to Björk's credit, incidentally, that she is so bold in her choice of videos – if we must have them, then at least let's make them good – but it's perhaps also an indication of her high maintenance as a singer. Unorthodox her vocal style may be, but those mannerisms get awfully familiar after a while – hence her need for a voluminous, continual stream of musical reinvention and visual variety.

Gondry is an innovator, though his ideas were quickly subsumed into insurance ads and *The Matrix*. The Rolling Stones employed him for a hip makeover and he obliged. If all that leaves a bland taste in the mouth, then all is redeemed by his video for Da Funk's "Around The World", a sort of robo-Busy Berkeley routine which reduces choreography to emotionless geometry. The result is one of the most additively odd and lessingly sexy videos ever made.

Chris Cunningham (*The Work Of Director Chris Cunningham*, 5990449 DVD) has a penchant for metamorphosis, as his video for Madonna's "Frozen" attests. He's at the dark end of the spectrum but still finds clients in adland – it was him who did the Playstation advert, included here, featuring the Scottish girl with the self-assured manner and elongated forehead. Most notable here is his work with the Warp brigade. He provides an exact, fast-cut visual transcription of *Autiech's* "Second Bad Vibes" right down to its last blast and booster engine; a weirdly comic scene involving a small, mislabeled Japanese girl in a mental institution and a dog; and, for *The Ashes* Twin, the hideous facial transpositions of "Window/Hello" and "Come To Daddy" have become part of MTV/Techno folklore. The latter particularly, with its army of herate

mini-Twin flood kiddies leering dementedly is genuinely funny, pokes at unexamined taboos in unpleasant but titillating ways, and as such has a value above and beyond the purely technically novel.

Finally, Spike Jonze (*The Work Of Director Spike Jonze*, 4908069 DVD) has long since made the transition into feature films (*Being John Malkovich*, *Adaptation*), but much of his video work remains unparalleled – integral or even additional to the listening experience rather than a commercially necessary filter. His earlier work with *The Beastie Boys* isn't much more than stylish pastiche, but his video for Da Funk's "Da Funk", featuring a lonely dogheaded man in the big city is a short, sweet movie in itself. His take on *The Notorious B.I.G.'s* "Sly's The Limit", in which the players in this gangsta's fantasy are played, *Bugsy Malone* style, by kids, slyly undermines his client, while his videos with *Fatboy Slim* add a little to the glory of nations where most video culture has sucked it away. "Weapon Of Choice", an opportunity to allow Christopher Walken a chance to show his dancing chops is a magnificent party piece. But the justly acclaimed "Praise You" steals the garlands – it's possibly the best video ever made.

With Jonze himself masquerading as "Richard Koufelz", leader of the Tornados Community Dance Group, their clumsily earnest but joyfully tireless efforts caught on grainy handheld camera in what may – or may not be – prearranged conditions outside a cinema, it raises all kinds of questions and pokes all kinds of fun. For example, the *Koufelz/Jonze* dichotomy mirrors the awkward question of who's responsible for what raised by its song subject, what's "real" and what isn't (like, to what extent does *Fatboy Slim* "write" the song, or singer Camille "Yarborough"), while the terrible but lamely ambiguous *Koufelz* parodies the American pop dream and the choreography-obsessed modern age.

Proof, as can be found on all these collections, that video can be an enhancement – but these are, unfortunately, the magnificent exceptions and not always exceptions at that. □



Wiggles (l) and sets (r): Whitehouse at the Arco Festival. Right: Still from Stan Brakhage's *Mothlight*

**ARGOSFESTIVAL 2003:
POLITICS OF NOISE
BRUSSELS RECYCLART
BELGIUM**

BY EDWIN BURNEY

Now in its third year, the Angos Festival plays host to a multitude of artistic expression in the audiovisual arts. Set in seven locations throughout Brussels, the festival offers a stage for film, video, concerts, exhibitions, lectures and debates, performances and encounters. This year's festival was further boosted by a series of concerts grouped under the title *Politics Of Noise*.

Set in a bar-like converted station with the rubble of tanks passing overhead, the opening track concentrated on the origins of noise focusing around the music and performance art related to Fluxus. With chairs arranged in a circle mimicking the floor a stage, The Legos Ensemble—a group of experimental musicians who were led by the bearded and pipe-smoking Godfried Wilhelm Rasch—inaugurated the event. Their act consisted of performances of works by avant-garde composers including Fluxus artists PT Groenewegen, Michael Rother, and Klaus Koenig, Francis Rung, Cornelius Cardew as well as Rasch's own 1998 piece "Dyadema" where an electric guitarist struggles to play while strenuously pumping the pedals of an exercise bike to generate the power at the same time. Following was a rare performance from former Fluxus artist Philip Corner and his wife, dancer, composer and musician Phoebe Neelander. After playing a recording of Corner's still remarkably fresh sounding electronic canon on images of wet "Daisies" (an early 60s precursor to lepto nose music if ever there was one), the couple drifted from the shadows to play a duet with bells and a gong that was the urbane odyssey of "Snitch's" dense acid rain assault. Corner's performance was followed by a trio of Rasch emboldened through two previous pieces. The first was a solo reading of his recent "The Concert Tonight Must Be Subjected To Aerial Bombardment" while the second was "Massive

Prelude", an action duet from 1967 where Comer brandishes a toy machine gun at the audience while Neville hands out flowers. Although this felt like a relic from his Vietnam War protest days, the relevance to the recent events in Iraq was painfully acute.

Two experimental films fixing fractured imagery together with sonic bits: Bill Viola's *Information* (1973) and Steen & Wendy Vasilik's *Noisefield* (1974), further set the concept of noise made visible. The central image in *Noisefield* is a throbbing, humming disc which looks as seen through the lens of a microscope, like some resonating living cell that needs to pulse. Viola's *Information* is a black and white film on a TV screen, where rolling patterns of TV interference—complete with a screeching soundtrack of feedback and bad reception—demonstrates that noise has a definable image. This theory is also part of Walter de Munnich's experimental short *Hard Core* (1969), described by the film maker in the notes as "a Minimal-Land-Mystery-Haunted-Western" Set in the desolate location of the Black Rock desert in Nevada with an ever changing sky overhead, "Hard Core" has the look of a painting by Mark Rothko. This was a precursor of the "noise" of the digital age, an electronic soundworld that culminates in a staggered shout between two cowboys whose *gunfire* is not through the heroic canals of the film.

Chapman's *Drum* filled the space with dry ice before turning up his laptop to blast out a set which could have made the ceiling crash down. An extensive bout of death ray strobe light rendering his set almost hallucinatory in its intensity. By now the space was choking with dry ice and cigarette smoke, through which could be faintly seen the shadow of Meg's Pin, his face illuminated by the ghostly glow from his laptop. Pin's nose is a complex multi-layered bombardment of digital metallic scraping and sonic dronapop overlaid; something that has its origins more seared in rock music than the avant garde. That said, his deconstruction of the genre bred over more to Macanua than *Mo'Noid*.

later teamed up with Krakow-born musician and composer Zbigniew Karkowski to perform as Pop, a modus of terrorist Techno and Black Metal guitar rock which pierced the billowing blackness of the verses like a jagged metal spike.

Metcrow's solo set was a masterpiece of multidimensional sound collage and atmospheric mood change as he took his audience to some nineties where a distant axis of inner peace and tranquility could be felt: booming over the stealth bomber end of the Metcrow modems as drags began to roll and arms were raised in almost spiritual celebration. Arms were also raised during the electronic taunting, deconstruction and maximalist melo to brocade that was thrown into the audience by the end of the set. The set was Whitehouse's. Starring critics Steve Lamacq, pop stars and songwriters, Willem Breuker and Phil Spector in a spread-armed parody of rock ideology – part James and part way Midway football supporter – as they demanded, "DO YOU BELIEVE IN ROCK?" over a string of electronic discards. Whitehouse threw back, their shirts now bared, Whitehouse raised the confrontation status with barbed jokes like "Wingie Like A Fucking Egg" and "Just Like A Cart" as the crowd crushed closer around them, reacting more to the drs he was causing than to the savage tongue lashing they were receiving. Love him or loathe them, Whitehouse remain an unpleasant, unpredictable and entertaining presence at their own shows. This unexpectedly control festival opened virtually every avenue of noise and showed that it has a place, a committed audience and a positive (and not contemptuous) music.

STAN BRAKHAGE
BY BRAKHAGE: AN
ANTHOLOGY

CRITERION COLLECTION CD154-00 2X DVD
RSC USA SUBMART

Film maker Stan Brakhage once recounted standing as a child in a Kansas cornfield late at night, "hearing shifting chords of sound that corresponded in meaningful lattices with what I



was seeing." This synaesthetic moment was clearly an epiphany, a point of departure into the nether regions that lie in and between the two senses.

His death earlier this year might be viewed as an act of mercy upon the rest of its lagards, granting the chance to contend with a truly momentous body of work: over 400 films, at least ten volumes of his playful yet indispensable theoretical writings. But quantity is one thing, and availability another: this is why *The Criterion Collection's* recent double DVD release, including 26 of his most exceptional films — many with accompanying commentary by Brakhage, longer interviews, and Fred Camer's insightful notes — is such a welcome offering.

Surely certain purists will object to the packaging of these films outside their native formats, but this DVD set is akin to what an art book for these works if documents — a beautiful, useful, and affordable way to contend with the original. The transition from film to digital media are stunning, and whatever might have been lost in the process is compensated by the possibility of repeated viewings.

Brainage sought to loosen our white-knuckled grip on conventional film grammar, but to what end? To journey inward, towards "the sphere of the 'music of the spheres'", as he wrote in 1966, "being now consciously the human head", here, perceptual thresholds were crossed, if not obliterated altogether.

With a tough-minded romanticism, this self-described "mountain man" (and student of both Cage and Varèse in the mid-50s) wove delicate slivery filigees from the remains of exploded motifs (Methlight); painted Vesuvius, submerged and extinguished in throbbing polyrhythms (The Dante Quartet); and on the rare occasion (as in the 37 creature myths of *The Stars Are Beacons*) when language was used, contradicted his assessment of himself as "a failed poet."



Left: The O Mensch! installation in Paris. Right: Mid-'60s Can on DVD



an extreme economy of means; roughly half of the films in this collection were made without so much as a camera. What's more, only five films in this set have any sound at all. The rest, in their silence, shine forth in visceral ecstasy with a masculinity that moves within the restlessness of hearing.

CHRISTIAN BOLTANSKI/ JEAN KALMAN/ FRANCK KRAWCZYK: O MENSCH! PARIS POINT P FIANCE

BY LOUISE GRAY

"O Mensch!" is the sound of exasperation that you might hear wherever you come across expatriated Germans, but as the title of an installation made by a trio of French artists for Paris's Festival d'Automne, O Mensch! takes on more somber tones. In the deserted corridor of Point P (an old plumber's depot on the Quai de Valmy, you hear roomfully sound the music, a howling gale whipping round the building and outside, an early quiet Paris. We find a jumble of chairs, overstuffed draped on them, but their owners? O Mensch! is O Mensch-Zero. They have disappeared—which is to say, in French at least, died.

For visual artist Christian Boltanski, composer Franck Krawczyk and theatre designer Jean Kalman, disappearance—and that strange aura possessed by a recently vacated space—may not be a new theme (the three first explored some of this world's concurrent parts in *Interieur*, an installation realized in Lyon in 2001), but it is certainly given a powerful rendition here. As their precursor, O Mensch! is the kind of work which requires its visitors to be listeners, spectators and participants. Since much of Boltanski's art ponders how the ephemeral—photoblog, rusty film and found photos have previously been pressed into service—assumes significant texts for otherwise insignificant lives, it's essential to listen to a series of improvisations and, perhaps, personal notes to Point P.

And so, on the dark and stormy night, we climb to the top of the curiously-shaped wedge to enter a long corridor that leads to a

central chamber. On the way there, you pass two rooms where impressive, swaddled figures play endless loops of Mahler on musical boxes. Kalman's lighting is architecturally done, making sharp corners sharper and the black blacker; it also means that people are silhouetted in a dramatic way, with halos of luminous proportions. And then to the centre, where Krawczyk, mounted on a little platform in the centre of the room, sits playing an accordion. His music is effortlessly languid, yet reassuringly familiar—the audio equivalent of a tip of the tongue moment. In the distance, you hear Mahler. Sometimes the massive box players shuffle between rooms; they may briefly open a window to gaze onto the Canal St Martin below. Other sounds come from wind machines, foghorns and a children's chorus that suddenly appear, wearing animal masks and singing "Frère Jacques" in Latin. Best of all, the flapping of enormous plastic sheets on the terrace. (An intermediate detail: it was a freezing, blowy night, perfect conditions.) Oh, there's also artificial snow drifting through.

Ultimately, the lack of a single key to unlocking O Mensch! is its great strength. The sleeker piece is full of meaning, and the space around its parts—the worn-out accordion, the elemental storm, the mechanical Mahler—contributes to a playful perversity. There is much that is delightful in its attentiveness, but the overall feeling of loss and, the black-it bewitching quest to find the world once more, is hard to counter.

CAN DVD RUDI DOLEZAL, HANNES ROSSSACHER & PETER PRYZGODA (DIRECTORS) MUTE SPOON/DVD+CD DVD+CD

BY DAVID KEEFEY

In order to mark the 35th anniversary of the founding of Can, still the most recognized and revered group to come out of Germany's late 60s/early 70s avant rock explosion, Mute have bundled a host of multimedia ephemera across the space of two DVDs and an audio CD, including the previously released career-spanning Can Documentary, the Can Free Concert from 1972 and a clutch of shorts, from a behind the scenes

look at the Can Solo Projects tour to a film by Brian Eno to mark the group's Echo Lifetime Achievement Award.

It's the sort of eclectic package that would seem to suit the group. Can were always a contradictory proposition: on avant garde stuff that openly embraced rock performance; conceptualists who were never comfortable with concepts; a group of very different and very strong individuals who constantly stressed the need to subsume any traces of personality to the derisive of the group mind. Yet it's difficult to think of any other Krautrock group where you could name every member.

Out of the whole set, the Can Documentary is the most revealing, if simultaneously the most frustrating. The editing is intrusive and tacky, with stills springing across the screen, slow-motion shots and jarring loops that stifle to visual aesthetic somewhere between a 70s edition of Top Of The Pops and a low-budget episode of Chris Morris's *Jesus* (the interviews are for the most part uninteresting, with the individual members incapable or unwilling to articulate the formation and gradual mutation of their aesthetic beyond a few jet clichés and vague congratulatory backslaps. And there's no reason to expect anything else from them, after all it's all there in the music. But given their reticence you would think that the film makers would have brought in someone who was capable of interpreting their codes and putting their music into some kind of wider context. As it is, the only section of the film where we hear their ideas and musicians talking about Can's impact is men now: an insert from a UK documentary made around the time of the group's Singspiel name album that features Nis Neides and James Lawrie spouting the vaguest of overblown platitudes.

In the end the real meat is in the performance clips, especially the Doro Susslen-era footage, where it's hard to believe that they ever made it to the annexes at all, their music simultaneously eschewer and emblem, barely referencing conventional form, while the whole group took like militant herds, all set to dynamite the studio at any moment.

As the production moves into later phases—

and unfortunately the bulk of the larger live clips are drawn from the post-Doro incarnation—Can seem to make more of a rapprochement with rock form. They even start to look pretty glam, despite keyboardist Irmin Schmidt's insistence that they never made any attempt to be relevant or to keep up with what was happening. But here's guitarist Michael Korth with his shirt unbuttoned to the waist, looking like David Cassidy with a habit, at best of all, the group live on The Old Grey Whistle Test, with Schmidt impressively camp in a chameau waistcoat taking key, comical kastle chops at his keyboard. It's hilarious and disarming at the same time, as Can's once-mysterious venerated elders before your eyes and you're left watching aghast as Schmidt mimics and mimics "I Went More" live on Top Of The Pops while decked out in a glibby Steve Secker baseball jacket. Even more upsetting is the way the film ends, with Can's music continuously dribbled behind and converging into the 60s with a mind-boggling leader video and remix by Germany's self-proclaimed "worst gang of the Raving Society" Westbam, which features lots of generic shots of ravers dancing, while the group themselves waddle aimlessly around the studio. It all feels just too temporally relevant for Can, who at their best would have gone on a mysterious parallel to whatever was going on contemporarily. Someone should really be taking more care of their legacy.

Fortunately for those whose birth has been reduced to rubble by getting as close and personal with their heroes, there's still the Can Free Concert, a fantastic, punk-punkish judgement of a show in front of 10,000 spectators in Cologne in 1972, with Doro decked out in a pink and red velvet jumpsuit, his vocal improvisations maimed straight to the moon while Michael Korth rips barbed shrapnel from his six strings and Hansi Holger Czekay and drummer Jaki Dierker hammer the whole thing to the floor. Interspersed with some intense, beautifully staged footage of the group recording at their inner Space studio, it's proof that at their best Can were an entity that absolutely transcended the individuals involved. Which serves to explain why a character-focused movie of a film like Can Documentary was never going to work. □

The Inner Sleeve

Artwork selected this month by Savage Pencil



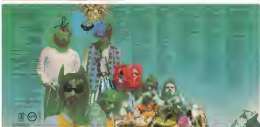
THE MOTHERS OF INVENTION CRUISING WITH RUBEN & THE JETS

VERVE 1966

DESIGNED BY CAL SCHENKELE

As a devoted Mothers Of Invention fan I bought *Cruising With Ruben & The Jets* the day it came out, rushed home and stuck it on my Daneco record player. Two things immediately puzzled me, the first being that the music The Mothers were making here sounded nothing like the complex arrangements that had assailed my imagination on previous albums like *Absolutely Free*, *Lunacy Gray* or *We're Only In It For The*

Money. Instead this was groovy, soaring, downbeat music that (gasp!) even my parents might like. My other concern was that the cover never even mentioned the group's name — apart from a speech balloon emerging from the portmanteau hairstyle of a mutated half man, half dog cartoon creature clutching an electric guitar that said, "Is this The Mothers Of Invention recording under a different name in a last ditch attempt to get their crackly music on the radio?" It was this intriguing mystery which kept pulling me back to the record to check out if this really was The Mothers' music, but what I really couldn't get out of my brain was MCI



house artist Cal Schenkel's cartoon cover. The surreality of depicting the group as a series of quecking, finger snapping dog faced musicians prompted me to start drawing my own version which would, years later, emerge as a regular comic strip called *flock 'N' Roll Zoo* in the pages of (now defunct music paper) *Sounds* when punk rock was at its height. About the same time I was cartooning for *Sounds*, I found a US reprint of the album and was amazed to discover that it had originally been released in a sturdy goldfoil cover. My original copy was the standard UK issue which, to save on production costs, had been reduced to a floppy laminated single sleeve

(goldfoil sleeves being reserved for the likes of Pink Floyd and Deep Purple). This revelation was like discovering the record all over again as Schenkel's inner photographic and arcane illustrative collage technique captured perfectly The Mothers' true freak potential by making them look like bangers from some other planet. What he also effectively managed to convey was a very real sense of what the group sounded like. Cal Schenkel's art has long been a source of inspiration, but it was this early mix of cartoon, photography and collage that he used on *CW&TJ* that aged me to try and draw music. □
Savage Pencil is an artist and cartoonist

Go To:



They look like moving pointillist neon tribae, but they are in fact ASCII art. **C404** (www.c404.nz/ascii/index.htm) have converted classic net videos — "Parasol", "Whole Lottz" and "Go Save The Queen", "Purple Haze" and "TNT" — into small green symbols on a black background, like an IBM computer display from 1986. The track sound like they've been played on your granny's Bontempi again. It's entertaining for approximately 15 seconds, unless you have a retro MS-DOS fetish, in which case there is probably no end to the fun. Browse through their site, though, and find other experiments in light and sound via a whole bunch of interactive QuickTime movies. More online experiments can be found at **Generator** (www.generator.com), home to a host of different online works centred around the idea of artist Stanza's DNA. The DNA code has been translated into sound code, which in turn has been displayed in interactive diagrams

allowing visitors to insert "viral" sounds to mess up the pattern. And, following that logic, creating mutant versions of the artist's bodily structure. **Sellmiread** (www.sellmiread.org) is a new Miles Davis resource offering a bunch of articles, photos, mailing list, links, databases (plenty of them) and even Miles wallpaper and downloadable icons. It encourages stories from the first time you heard Miles, so if you have an ephedry you want to share, contributions are welcome. While you're at it, collect unreleased unofficial Miles recordings by **Jurich Miles Trees** (www.miles-trees.org), an operation which promises to give you access to a whole thicket of rarities. For those wanting to research what goes on in Australian sound art and the discourse around it head straight to **Australian Sound Design Project** (www.soundsdesignproject.org.au). A Website and database dedicated to researching

and publishing original works and the (at times highly academic) discourse relating to sound and design in public space, the site is hosted by the University of Melbourne. To the "browse" section to get a list of essays, sound works and artists' biographies. If you're more moved by Miami Vice, go the recent issue of online art **Catascopic** (www.catascopic.com), which rattles off a potpourri history, as well as an interview with Chilean born electronic musician **Dinky** along with music reviews and charts. Finally, **Covers Project** (www.coversproject.com) is an enormous database of cover versions. You can search by artist or just browse in the vast artist list that includes everyone from Olivia Newton John to John Zorn. The site aims to create "cover charts", a set of songs which is covered by an artists who has been covered by another artist, who has been... And so on. **ANNE HILDE MESEY**

On Location

Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, events in the flesh



DE STIJL/FREEDOM FROM FESTIVAL OF FINE LINE MINEAPOLIS MUSIC LINE USA

BY DAVID KEENEAN

2003 was the year that the American sub-underground finally broke cover, with a series of defiantly programmed festivals rising up across the continent like beautifully disfiguring plagues. From Vermont's Free Folk Fest and Portland's 5000 Strings Of The Sun through Chicago's Loast Acid Folk Fest and The Wire's own Empty Bottle celebration, Minneapolis's De Stijl/Freedom From fest was the most ambitious of the lot, as over the space of two days a virtual call out of the country's most consistently wayward activities were joined by international wild cards like Sweden's Tild Girls. Ock Schar and UK folk singer Bridget St John for a blowout that attracted a staggering amount of heads.

Early on the first day the Thornton Moore/Jim O'Rourke/Chris Connolly/Paul Flaherty Action Unit lined the stakes with one of the richest assaults on form ever to take place in broad daylight, with Moore eventually forsaking any kind of contact with his guitar in favor of dry-humping his limp into whole new vectors of abstract vibration. That saxophonist Flaherty missed the first half of the show while pinning himself outside only served to bolster the belated acceleration of energy by the time he made it to the stage the trio had shredded so many risks and strings that it was down to him to reanimate the entire group, firing off a live collage of tonal gurgles that lit up the stage like flames. Drummer Connolly's liberated, intensely physical approach to the kit provided a spontaneous rhythmic framework that O'Rourke exploited to the max, alternating savage bouts of

lacerating lead with some interpretive pinging and rock of effects pedals.

Next up was a solo set from saxophonist Arthur Doyle, who was always at his most emotionally devastating when he's on his own, the pure flow of his spirit is unnumbered by the gravity of another tongue. His inventions for voice, horn and flute are so intensely personal and non-dramatic that he long ago transcended his nominal identity as a "free jazz saxophonist" and now occupies a singular zone where extrapolated field hollers, nursery rhyme melodies and free associative sound poetry combine with all the force of oracular prophesy. Doyle's Minneapolis set revealed around extended unaccompanied vocal run-downs, with the saxophonist often leaping around himself between gurgling register drops and word gibbering rags. When he did strap his saxophone on, he played with unimportant force, anchoring scales and storming through glib registers.

Bridget St John is primarily revered for her bewitching 1969 recording *Ask Me No Questions*, her debut album on John Peels' Dandelion label, and although some moments during her Minneapolis performance allowed glimpses of her previous form, her more recent material is the kind of platitudes, morose minimalist guff that would drive even the hardest tourist out of Greenwich Village. In her wake came the freemason St John's belated ensemble Wooden Wand And The Vanishing Voice. Despite plenty of positive notices in advance of their performance, they failed to really ignite as they beat out a tribal pow-wow on cardboard boxes to a chant of "Island! Retard!", an uninspiring scenario only released from the jaws of catastrophe by the well timed and executed collapse of guest percussionist Matt Kieffing of Son Of Earth-Flash On. Done his.

Tara Burke's solo Furaxse project re-engaged the mind with delectable keyboard and acrobatic dance offset by infinite folds of unadorned vocal loops, while the MV & EE

Medicine Show worked alchemical magic with tongsque corners of Elizabeth Cotten's "Fright Train" and Roy Gaby Davis's "Death Don't Deny Me Mercy Is This Land," alongside a backdrop of exquisitely handcrafted originals.

The Wayne Rogers Unit were the first group to deal in anything approaching direct rock form and as such they were ideologically entertaining, with Rogers's reputation of classic shapes and guitarist Kate Riggs's port and seer launching a metallic psych-folk hybrid that referenced Thunderpunch Newman as effortlessly as it did ad beatniks like High Tide or Mount Rushmore.

But in terms of ad attack, no one approached Bortomatoes. Forced to play within forty five ton neighborhoods, the trio of Sauter, Dutch and Miller to liberate all of their working strategies into a convoluted ball of white light that was as bare bending as it was graceful, with saxophones Sauter and Dutch looking home and almost wallowing around each other while Miller drilled his guitar straight through the table. Dutch climaxed the set with one of the most leviathan saxophone solos I've ever been in the same room with, gurgling beer through a tube into his horn as he arched over onto his back a spray of side string back down into his face. It was down to Roy Connolly to close the first night with a set that was more dynamic than his best-known minimalist work, assembling a staggering, convoluted sound from single syllables cast across his voice. Maintaining skin peeling volume, Connolly played on well after the lights had come up.

Chick's Burning Star Core, led by violinist and multi-instrumentalist CS Meh, were one of the second day's highlights, moving from harrowing violin drones to a percussion and electronics led vocal piece that felt somewhere between the enigmatic fury of Ennio Morricone and the controlled poetry of sound artists like Henri Chopin.

Dead Machines, the duo of Wolf Eyes' John Olson and Wooden Wand's Tomah O'Rourke, generated their industrial tributes with a

colossal mélange of cracked analogue tones and overfed effects, while Jack Rogers and always stellar acoustic improvisations moved them from primary influences like John Fahey and out into uncharted, although still unmistakably American waters. But it was Jackie O Motherfucker who most fully transcended the materials they were working with, squinting on stage beneath a celestial glaze of looper blues and zones of tone, they sounded simultaneously ancient and impossible, finishing off with a stepped down take on Joseph Spence and The Prisoner Family's "I Bid You Goodnight".

In the wake of Jackie-O's benign alchemy, The No Neck Blues Band staged a psychotically charged happening that threatened to spill into violence at any moment, with vocalists Keith Connolly haranguing the audience with insipid stream of consciousness insults, while the group launched into over his head and perspiration David Nuss walked the edge of the balcony with a guitar completely obnoxious as his weapon. As guitar and bass worked a relentless jackhammer, the set peaked with Nuss grinding a broken bottle into his hand before urging Connolly to bring it all to a halt.

Following their onstage were NNCK's current touring companions, Tild Girls Ock Schar, active on and off now since 1969. In direct contrast to NNCK's Atomiumville, they projected a benign air as they belted through some extended redout jams that mimicked punk primitive aesthetics with plenty of Progressive flash.

After such an inspiring couple of days the festival crashed to earth with a stomach-churning splash thanks to the final night's headliners Dwight Fozzle and his Black Crack Revue, who, despite Fozzle's legendarily wicked 1976 LP *Beyond The Black Crack*, have evolved into a distressingly earthbound and pedestrian San Francisco group. It was an unfortunately banal comedown from two of the most exhilaratingly programmed days of music you've ever likely to stumble upon. □

Clockwise from top left: Action Unit, Tild Girls, Ock Schar, Bridget St John, Dead Machines and Arthur Doyle at De Stijl/Freedom From

DEAF: DUBLIN ELECTRONIC ARTS FESTIVAL DUBLIN GUINNESS STOREHOUSE IRELAND

BY ANNE HILDE NISSEY

Now in its second year, Dublin Electronic Arts Festival went out to consolidate the Irish capital's status as a major player in the nurturing of electronic music, alongside Barcelona (Sonar), Berlin (Tanzmusik/Marke B) and Detroit (DEAF). As the press release enthusiastically puts it, Dublin has a "freshness and vivacity that, increasingly, is becoming the envy of other countries around the globe". Running for ten days over a number of different venues, DEAF hosted 40 concerts and included a screening program as well as a visual platform. The main thrust of the festival was the last weekend at the Guinness Storehouse, and unfortunately the venue was by far the most

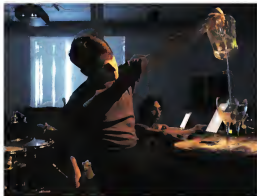
impressive feature. Founded by Arthur Guinness in 1759 and covering a 50 acre site, it's a vast brewery and storehouse that has been transformed into a museum and art gallery. This multi-storied master of a building houses five simultaneous concerts on different floors, of which the Gravity Bar, a glass cylinder at the very top, impressed the most. With a 360 degree view over nighttime Dublin, the circular bar served what has to be the best Guinness in the world. The only problem with this massive warehouse party is that it offered no calm area, no 30s style chill-out zone, no divergence from the 4/4 techno shaping the building's foundations.

It wasn't at Techno, despite the headlining presence of Robert Hood and Technika. Drum 'n' bass of a vintage kind was supplied by Phixiel and more drum — as opposed to live on stage and spun into tracks that evolved before your ears. Even if it was a relief to see a divergence from pure knob-twiddling, the experiments amounted

undoubtedly got onstage who stood on stage, strangely still, smoking a cigarette. From Berlin, Scoop and Paul St. Helms (formerly Glimmer) served up a familiar, but no less exciting, low end oceanic mood but set the deep currents making the floor sway. Only a few meters from the stage stood two cylindrical, curved-out compartments just big enough for one person to stand in, showing a selection of videos by artists such as Roger Doyle and Andrew Keogh, so matter how attentively you approached them, though, it was well nigh impossible to concentrate due to the intense soundbloom from the stage.

Also from Berlin, a City Centre Offices label showcase featured Ulf Schwaiger, who introduced Ulf Schwaiger live instruments — a symbol and snare drum — as opposed to live on stage and spun into tracks that evolved before your ears. Even if it was a relief to see a divergence from pure knob-twiddling, the experiments amounted

modestly to more of the same — ie look-at-me electronic by numbers. Despite appearances by Ianer, Lush, Akushe and Pisk, nothing shook the feeling that the weekend could have been a little more adventurous in the programming. Too bad to the regular beat, the Website statement ("DEAF is firmly committed to showcasing the extreme end of experimental electronic music and is dedicated to building a festival programme of the highest artistic integrity") ring somewhat hollow. Either in the week there had been showcases from 12K, Raster-Noten and a set by Pita and Keith Rowe, that this week's weekend event badly needed such offshoots straying from the beaten path. Sonar's success lies in the mingling of the massively popular with the marginal. With such an enormous venue, the DEAF weekend had to have included from a more diverse mix of adventurous acts and a wider conception of electronic music per se. Oh, and a chill-out room for the security lot. □



Clockwise from top left: [The User], Phonographics, Sunburned Hand Of The Man and Acid Mothers Temple at Kill Your Third Nucleus in Dundee

KILL YOUR TIMID NOTION DUNDEE CONTEMPORARY ARTS

BY NEIL COOPER

"I feel more at home here than I do in my neighbourhood in New York," says satyromorphic Beat poet, compulsive namsadapper and living charismatic totem in Cohen, introducing a screening of his legendary Angus Mackay/La Monte Young soundtracked film, *The Invasion Of Thunderbolt Pagoda*. Bearing in mind that it's a Sunday afternoon in Dundee, such a magnificent statement, however much it's designed to flatter, is pretty big cheese indeed.

Taking up residence amid the di-chi-white cube main gallery inside one of Europe's sexiest 21st century spaces, this precariously named three day festival of sight and sound embraces two specific strands of thought cross-crossing each other beyond its solely aural/visual intention.

On the one hand, Philip Jeck, [The User] and

Phonographics offer more insular reflections that tappe cariously but utterly, unerringly focused through rice paper-strown memory dreamscapes. On the other, the more conventionally diffused East meets West psych-rock exponents of Acid Mothers Temple and Sunburned Hand Of The Man crash and fall unfiltered into cacophonies of noise-induced riversia some might call a trip. In the co-mart's kind at the heart of both, a convergence takes place that, in this context, makes perfect cosmic, not to say topsodic sense.

Philip Jeck's performance eased and oozed as into the weekend. His usual array of junkshop tumbables conjured a jumbled-up collage of sepiu coloured scratch 'n' stutter, in which slo-mo East End pub piano trinkets and shards of backwards raga become as much vintage museum piece installation as generator of living history.

Taking the acoustic properties of a massive gain slio in Montreal as its starting point, [The User's] 'Slopshop' beta Dundee-generated sounds betwixt Scotland and Canada via ISDN,

only to have them bant out of shape and morphed into some Chinese whipsaw-style mutant at either end. Visualised by pretty splashes of just formed but perfectly regimented blue and yellow, the space left between each suggests wordless time points igniting the landscape.

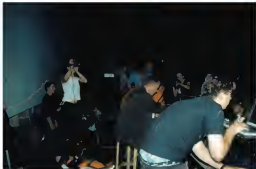
For their first ever UK appearance, Sunburned Hand Of The Man bring home moves to accompany their freeform freekicks, and, like good tsunamis, shoot a few more for good measure. Entering with a soothing wail, their wayward nouveau jug band clutter instantly veers off down thrilling back road indulgences, where one of the drummers wraps his kit, then himself, up in red tape, snares are balanced on heads and the whole shooting match sounds like a gloriously messy cry after liberation.

Anchoring the class is the seismic meteoric thunder of bassist and Peter Dinklage lookalike Rob Thomas, who, in his instrument's blissfully insistent bombast, recalls classic Steve Harley-era Fall. If SHOTM ultimately push too hard and peak too soon, it's nobody's fault,

That's just how it is.

Thanks to British Airways and a series of road delays en route from Birmingham, Tatsuya Yoshida's Burns very nearly don't make KOTN's Sunday session at all. As it is, bassist Hisashi Sasaki is injured, and the ad hoc co-opting of assorted Acid Mothers Temple members into the fold lends a rip-roaring urgency to their truncated one-band Japanese New Music Festival, from the gabbling a cappella of Zutsu Zutsu X to the amplified manipulations of a haldill zipper.

Phonographics, featuring Christian Fennesz, Werner Dafeldecker, Marti Seewert and Burkhard Stangl, finish things on a sublime note, as they perform a live version of their gorgeous score to Gustav Deutsch's stunning, multi-screen film *rit*. While meteorically sourced vintage alone inspire postage jumpsuits its way through modern times, steel guitar and numbertum keytop twirls breathe deep on the fragile, eyes-wide stream of coincidence onscreen. As intrusions of immortality go, it leaves a staggering hush in its wake. □



Clockwise from top left: Vedlar Delaj, Leafcutter John, Mouse On Mars and Matmos at Rome's Dissonanze

DISSONANZE ROME MACRO & CHIOSTRO DEL BRAMANTE ITALY

BY TONY HERRINGTON

In a corner of central Rome there sits a former slaughterhouse that has had the guts ripped out of it as part of the process of becoming the Museo D'Arte Contemporanea Roma (Macro). It's a familiar narrative of atrophy and some kind of renewal: as the heavy industry moves out, the Italian industry moves in. And over one weekend in early October, this rectangular, hangar-like space is armored once again, becoming the right time venue for the Dissonanze festival, an increasingly vital node on the global post-electronica network.

Inside the main building of the Macro, meat hooks hang from iron rails high overhead as reminders of a bloody past, while in the adjacent courtyard-cum-foyer area, split screens project images of fully shap and ruminating cattle alongside footage of manning machines, pecking plants and leaves sowing through raw flesh. On the two nights that Dissonanze descends to this deserted abattoir, no blood is split, but on the Friday at least, the music provides much meat for mind and body.

Dissonanze's various events (which this year included a collaboration between choreographer Enzo Cosimi and Jo Pascoia, R&B's Robert Lippick;

a series of talks on digital art and mode presented under the Dis-lab banner; an exhibition of new Scandinavian graphic design) are spread out across six days and various venues. But the main action takes place during this early October weekend.

The Friday night line-up at Macro is presented as an "All Star Game" released by Matmos and featuring Vicki Bennett (aka People Like Us), Keith Fullerton Whitman (aka Hnrski), Mouse On Mars and J. Lessor. But as it pans out, it's more like a tag team match in which all the players are on the same side. The sets flow seamlessly one into the other while retaining plenty of individual detail and nuance. Vicki Bennett's plaudispheric pinpoint narratives sync up perfectly with the animated island footage montages that are projected onto three large screens that overlook the long, shallow stage which runs down one side of the building. Whitman seeds electronic blocks of sound surging and bouncing around the hall, the complexity and intensity of the textures increasing with each reverberation. Matmos, the duo of Drew Daniel and MC Schmidt here augmented by guitarist Mark Lightfoot, rev up the guitar-driven tracks from the *Civil War* into spellbinding motorik action. Mouse On Mars, now back to a duo of Jan St Werner and And' Tomo, warp dub basslines into wend shapes under jackhammer beats, while Lessor mutilates Metallica and

Slayer samples into a sheer heikun masina.

The programme for the Saturday night, by contrast, is a curious mix of the laddish (Andy Weatherall, Radioactive Man) and the kitsch (Miss Kittin, Soft Pink Truth). In any event, The Wire contingent arrives late, having been marooned on the other side of town by an electric storm of equatorial proportions, and then leaves early, drenched by a heavy downpour of bergin' boots.

By day, the festival (and the mood) shifts to the Chiostro del Bramante, a 15th-century cloister located right in the heart of the city. The asidene hang around the fringes of the small courtyard engaging in small talk, or sit cross-legged on cold flagstones. A fug of dope smoke hangs over the proceedings.

On the Saturday, the differences marking the sets by Alog, Andreas Tillander, Vladislav Deby and Mikael Stavitskiand can be measured in degrees. Synthetic chords swell in melancholy sequences, generic so-dub rhythms boogie under live effects mists. Heard from the first floor balcony the music becomes ever more cavernous and indistinct. But during Stavitskiand's final set, which begins as night falls, the so-bass sequences and midrange tones and drones spiral up from under in billowing thermals, phosporous guttles illuminating the dying of the light.

Friday's line-up was more diffuse. Goodnight

arrived in Italy from Denmark with one broken leg and two heavily bandaged wrists, but being a consummate professional, played anyway. Kim Morley's accelerated breakbeats into sizzling hi-end patterns. The sets by Anton Niskila and Leafcutter John (filling in for the absent Opasit, and so the only non-Scandinavian on the daytime programme) generated raw textures that ribbed and chafed at the skin, though the booming acoustics, and maybe even the delivery, meant John ran roughshod over the land of electroacoustic subtleties that made his recent *The Housebound* Spant album so compelling. The previous night, at a free open air Dis-lab event staged outside the Piccolo di Scienze della Comunicazione at the city's Università La Sapienza, John had performed much the same set, the main difference being that, at the cloister, he kept his shirt buttoned, at the university it hung open to reveal what looked suspiciously like a black bra. Was there something we weren't being told about the cross-dressing habits of one of the burgeoning stars of post-electronica? Too polite to ask on the night, it's not until the Sunday evening, when we share a tad with John on the way to the airport, that we get the answer. It was indeed a bra, but camouflaged with confetti mics inserted in the cups and wired to an effects box. "It looks like a ruggas concrete sounds," John explains, "except it's just me rubbing my tits." □

On Location



ROME WASN'T BURNED IN A DAY LONDON LYRIC THEATRE UK

BY NICK BOUTHOUZE

Alan Cope's polymorphous enthusiasms lead him far and wide, journeying across the British Isles and Europe documenting megalithic monuments simultaneous to his spiritual and artistic quest for the elemental energies behind rock music. *Rome Wasn't Burned In A Day's* three nights are not, however, just miscellanies of one man's obsessions and indulgences. They are a concrete demonstration of Cope's being and evolving philosophy of what constitutes "barbaric Rock 'N' Roll," to be the end the festival explores the meeting of the shaman and rock through lectures, film and music.

The purpose of the rock 'n' roll shaman is to rise up from the sensual backdrops of uptight Roman thought. This conceives with a premonition, the occult, and non-rational humanity is locked ritually into the final night in a sequence of

Clockwise from left: Crys Cole and Penelope in Vancouver; Meli-Banana in Birmingham; Suncoi and Isiah Cope in London

MELI-BANANA BIRMINGHAM MEDICINE BAR UK

BY MARTIN LONGLEY

Today marks Meli-Banana's fourth European tour served as a hearty push for their recent *Cole* CD. Since disc. After a decade's activity it's only their fourth studio album, although Meli-Banana have also issued a compilation of cassette obscurities, a live set and 18 EPs. Their reputation has been forged via massive exposure on John Peel's show — not least their staggering series of live broadcasts.

The live-up remains both (speak vocals), Agita (passionate guitar) and Rika (contortious bass),

events to honor the radical archaeologist TC Leishridge. Colin Wilson (celebrated author of *The Outsider* and *The Occult*) and Woburn John speak about Leishridge's early scholarship on the myths and customs of seafarers and later immersion in fringe topics of witches, ghosts, divination and dowry. Leishridge's spirit of enquiry by predicting and reclaiming ideas is paid further homage by The Sons Of TC Leishridge, a critically engaging series of spoken word essays on Leishridge's themes backed by music from a group of longevous Cope adepts.

Musically the history of the rock shaman is presented in a film strand that features wondrous cartoon-pitch drenched *Red Club* loquacious of Aron Döhl and a rambling, possibly homemade, documentary of early 70s Japanese vaqueros Taj Mahal Toveilles making and playing their own instruments by the sea, as well as clips of Van Der Graaf Generator, Japanese underground heavies Les Rallies Desertes, the mythically masked early Kias.

Sadly the timing of the film means they play to varying levels of neglect. A similar fate befalls the three-man hall support acts. The audience, it is clear, is here for Cope and acts related to him

with *Burnt By The Sun's* Dave Gutter guesting on drums. The instrumentalists come out first, setting up a killing momentum for *Isiah's* postulated release.

Agita sweeps everything along, striking, hitting and slurring his guitar to produce broad swathes of multilayered distortion, or alternately, light sludgers punctuated with razor passes. A beltless scissor his runs up and down the frets, as he sometimes toys with outbreaks of what sound like accelerated boogie wogie or sludgy bar-room blues. Rika's bass is weighty but nimble, fingers alighting hard as she unweaves convoluted lines that repeat and intertwine with Agita's wall of noise. Wave constantly changes rhythm

low beat. Hence Holy McPaul, Cope's pretty-boy sister wizard, gets more people along for his video and synth pieces more than his Collecting Earthquakes (*Neotectonics*) album in the side hall than any of the main hall supports. While this isn't undesired — McPaul's piece is intoxicating and vividly elemental — it's a shame because the festival has lived up three world-class modern shamanic rock acts.

Thursday and Friday nights are bullfights from the free folk explosion growing ever stronger, brighter and stranger through the forward thinkers of Massachusetts. Thursday brings on the rustic junk streetgang groove of Sanborned Mind Of The Man led by the Raw John Molesley's private blues bolton, they spill their slow loping pawl over the inflated, lucky or quirky. On Friday Vancouchead Orchestra play to a yet smaller crowd, their trip is a more intense and spiritual one. Incessantly swapping instruments, the pulsing lines of tremolo guitar, percussion and Eastern wind instruments send ecstasy tremors to the soul while Suncoi Head Of The Man's rhythm section move the body.

Sunn Digg fill the slot on the final night, for a tiny number of people. Paradoxically what most

direction, making down these sudden shifts, with all four Bananas perfectly attuned to the communal dynamics of each startled turn.

Meli-Banana have become such a bonded unit that they can ride these rapids with ease, maintaining a level of not at all boring in the audience that doesn't let up over their hour-long set. The entire experience is intensely compact: extremely short songs that manage to communicate their secretiveness, like a series of movie snipes.

Yoko sways gently against the unrelenting bombardment of her handrives, nimbly out her microphone half like she's about to measure up a bespectacle suit, tiring her head slightly as if to

miss a Cope inferring a mythical prize-poetry piece to the un-sunrise of Sunn Digg, the march of Sunn Digg's geological dreamlike music, immense in its scale and tectonic in its progress, suits Cope's nagging preoccupations.

It is the Holy Rock Cope, however, that everyone is here to see. Richly bearded, generously bearded and sporting plastic-widened sunglasses, the 46-year-old Cope looks like a Celtic George Clinton. He concentrates through the audience, performing whole songs from the stalls, grunting, preening and playing the balloon at every turn. To his credit, for all his knowledge of music's history, there's nothing knowing about his performance. It is an ebullient and uplifting show drawing nudes on the recent monolithic reference rock of Brian Donoh and any special moment that plagues this funny ("Pulsar"), "Spacemaster", "Raymond The Fox". By the final night, Cope's voice is shot and the grass blows across to threaten falling apart, but it's at least making sense. As Melissa Elodie remarked in his defining study, *Shamanism: The shamanic voyage is manifested by a crisis, a temporary disengagement of the future shaman's spiritual equilibrium*. Alan Cope, it would appear, is being reborn once more. □

coat out the finest nuances of lyrical precision. No matter how hard, dance, speed or intense these truncated songs are, she's reeling off staccato lines with an unerring rhythmic attack, leaving behind her melodic sense, always singing rather than speaking garbled shouts. Yoko, eyes darting left and right, seems to be in a quiet sphere of her own, partly oblivious to the surrounding swirl overhead.

After the first encore, music's pined through the PA, but the crowd keeps following for more. Just as everyone starts to drift away, Meli-Banana come back on for another one minute assault, an almost ludicrously brief return for these masters of new headstamping clarity. □

ELECTRIC CITY VANCOUVER VARIOUS VENUES CANADA

BY LEE HENDERSON

For any city the list of more than 50 performers featured under the month-long Electric City festival umbrella is superfluous. For Vancouver, it's downright excessive. However truly it is to choose highlights — from the nostalgia

"see heard a cage" to the emerging work at the gallery — there's no doubt that the four night run, under not-universally title *Dangerous*. Currents, remains the biggest draw including, among others, Dame Yashinski, Tokyo Noisio, Philip Jack, Tim Hecker, Francisco Llop, Konk Pack and last night headliner Christian Fennec. Decker isn't most people with nothing but a moth fluttering out of their enervated wallets.

Opening an electroacoustic festival with a nod to the past is generous and appropriate. For "see heard a cage", Vancouver's artist-run centre the Western Front invited Joshua Stevenson (Acidic/Obscure) and Scott Morgan (Loud) for laptop remixes of archived performances. Morgan heavily minimizes a Kaffe Matthews piece in set drone, while Stevenson's sounds threaten like wild dog howls, made

from an old live recording by Donald Decker, the man responsible for inventing the vintage-controlled synths used by Morton Subotnick, among others.

Mid-month, the downtown *Q* gallery becomes the site for Brady Charnoff's selection of Vancouver's emerging artists. Under *Circuits* features an ear-boggling range of work, from the rancorous ambience of synth fetishist Siroa Cakes to the madcap Farmers Manual-style plunking of Jeff Crawford and Josh Rose, not to mention such assemblage junkie Scott Mennery, whose electronic debut was released this year on Kit Clayton's Orlingbird Music label. Stefan Uddell from The Beans gives a casual and intimate set of computer filtered accordion, guitar and oddly seething steel metal noise. Lo-fi conceptual artist David Doyle presents a hilarious and inspired DVD of her and collaborator Tony Romano on synthesizers, wearing dronic cowls and giant headphones, playing in various monstrous locations around a complex, a postural wiley and a Victorian parlour. The Collapsing Lung duo play an inventive set of noises made from junk strung in a battered suitcase, a cowbell and adaxons on a guitar, adding to it a dither of

computer digital that references San City Girls and Nobukazu Iimura aka. Crys Cole is the highlight. Recently moved from Montreal, she delivers velvet organo animism. With a steel meditation ball and a silver necklace, which she rolls and drags over a contact mic, adjusting the sound on a small meaning board, Crys has the focus and poise to allow the room to absorb every prickle, wince and reverberation.

The return of Montreal resident Tim Hecker to the home town is welcomed by a *Dangerous* Currents audience that can't figure out where he is. While we all stare at an empty stage, somewhere hiding on our right, Hecker is rotating zones from his two phenomenal CDs *Hauer* Me and *Radiant Amor*. The falling effect of a hidden musician makes his set a little less mesmerizing than watching Philip Jack screw with two of the most beat-up, duct-taped turntables you'll ever see. But a night of confusion makes perfect sense once Francisco Llop asks us to be as the requiré blindfold and down in his complete sound immersion. From Llop we learn that performance is alive. From the first future fakes of hell to the chirping, squalid ensue of the jungle, to the

ascending shrieks of heaven's gates, he firms his narrative prose audibly gasping for air. For a long moment no one in the unit room is sure whether to clap or cry.

Grab label artists Konk Pack are utterly awesome. Featuring Thomas Lahn on the craziest old EMS Synth A, Tim Henderson on fat guitar and Roger Tarran on percussion, the show is awkwardly brilliant and defiant. With starting combinations of punkish naivety, ingenious orange-age, swirling, slithering, tapping and tripping sound inventions, Konk Pack are one of the most exciting live groups in the world.

Half an hour later, across town Fennec does a set that could be measured by blindfold. Compared to the witty anxiety of Konk Pack, other, bland, but, on the evidence of other laptop artists in the festival, Fennec has few rivals. Hecker's set had more emotional weight, but some of the sounds coming from Fennec's computer are totally unreal. From a guitar wailer to a hiss that glitters like jewelry, he makes a disconcerting art of obscure circles. In the end, it's not so much Fennec's work as its beauty. This becomes his intelligence — to surf instead of sink, to cruise rather than combust, to give out good not bad vibrations. □



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Acoustic in the UK: The Ra Ra

UK festivals

LMC FESTIVAL: ADVENT GARDE

LONDON
London Musicians' Collective's seasonal fundraising music festival. Entrance is free, bar profits and donations will go towards the LMC's Resonance 1004.4 FM fund (see Special Events). Confirmed artists are Billy Jenkins, Roy J Grant/Robbed Sanders/Alan Tomlinson, The Trip Computer Die, Art Tony & The Fairies, Eric Pheme, Alex Russell, Naam On Vacuum plus special guests, interval soundscapes by Mamer and bar entertainment from Ken Lee's Sauna in the Corner Band. London Conway Hall, 12 December, 7pm, www.lesonancecollective.com

PLAYLOUNDER

LONDON
Five evening concerts taking in HipHop, folk, electronica and out rock. The Fatheads, Patsak Wolf, Gamma Round (1 December), Rara Kot, The Kilens (2), Howlsday Workman, Joy Zogger, Elta Gura (3), Gold Chairs, Rik Osep, Core, Dabrye, Cross Village (4), Cassette Boy, DJ Rabbitt, Ruyke & Mijagi and A1 Records artists (5) in the bar (5). London ICA, 7pm, £10-£8, 020 7530 3647, www.ica.co.uk

ULTRASOUND

Huddersfield
Edgy contemporary music festival which includes performances by extreme vocalists Jaap Bloor and Joan La Barbara, and a whole bunch of folk from the thriving folk music scene, including Kirsten Metzger, Boris Stiffpasta, Jhane Johansson and many others, plus installations, workshops, talks and DJ evening. Huddersfield The Media Centre, 27-29 November, 0870 990 5007, www.ultrasound.co.uk

International festivals

FESTIVAL NOT D'HIVER

FRANCE
Festival of drumming in Marselle. Daytime workshops with Uruguayan percussionists are complemented by evening concerts of improvised music featuring Western players such

as Paul Lytton, Chris Cutler, Jim Meneses and others. Montevideo-Studio Musique, 16-21 December, 00 33 4 9104 6958, www.grim-museo.com

KLAP OF DE VUURPUL

NETHERLANDS
The Willem Breuker Kollektief have curated this five day event featuring top quality performers from improvised music, modern composition and new jazz, with the Kollektief themselves playing each night. The line-up includes Orlano Yoshida, Don Byron, Nguyen Le, Itaru Akiyama and Hans Dulfer plus composed works by Jannis Xenakis, Elliott Carter and Samuel Barber. Amsterdam Westerkade, 27-31 December, 15 Euro per evening, €30 on New Year's Eve, kolektiefwillem.com, www.bvtsa.nl

OCTOPUS FESTIVAL

FRANCE
Electronic festival spread across three French cities. Performers include Safety Structures, Alva not, Morphogenesis group and solo performances and film. Dano Suszalski Network, Whitehouse, Permanent Real, Westland (DJ Sound and i-Sound), Stephen Mcca and others. Paris, Bordeaux and Pau various venues, 6-13 December, 00 33 1 4314 7373, www.movement.net/music

SINTESI

ITALY
Second edition of this two day electronic arts festival takes place in a 19th century building in the old part of Naples. The festival's focus this year is on synaesthesia and participating artists include Coda, Francesco Lipari & Klaus Schwab, Torone, Si-jouff, Jo, Jason Khan, Senking, Mitchell Amonia, Filitt, Tina Frank, Tux and others. The festival also includes video, installations and workshops. Napoli Rotta degli Espediz Museum and Velvet Club, 6-7 December, 4pm-4am, 00 39 081 7611221, www.sintesia.it

SONARSound ROMA

ITALY
Two day electronic music event that takes in HipHop, surreal Japanese pop and more besides. The featured performers are Reiji Ikeda, Takeda Naoko, Schneider TM, Matthew Herbert Big Band, The Puppetmatters, Skidsl, Se Begg,

Dante Rex Martus-M, Janna Ladel, Frame and Mass. Rome Brancalone and Auditorium Parco della Musica, 29-30 November, www.romaeuropa.net

2:13 ATHENS FESTIVAL

GREECE
Fourth annual get together for a European improvisers pool mixing acoustic and electronic instrumentation in changing combinations. The ten participating musicians include Xavier Claes and Mark Walltell. There will also be a 'relay' event on the final night involving continually changing combinations of musicians on three stages in different locations. Athens Small Music Theatre, 11-13 December, www.2-13.co.uk

Special events

FILE UNDER SACRED MUSIC

UK
The filmed recreation of The Clamps' 1978 performance at the Napa State Mental Institute is given a preview (19 December) before being installed in the gallery until the end of January. Northampton Roadside, 01604 604222, www.fileundersacredmusic.com

INSTANTS CHAUVRES

FRANCE
The Wini continues its relationship with the Paris experimental music venue by co-presenting two series of concerts this month. Morphogenesis (10-12 December), and the duo of Gilroy Miller and Urs Linsinger with dancer Fine Kwardowski supported by The Arte Saxophone Quartet (19-20). Paris Instants Chauvres, www.instantschauvres.fr

RESONANCE 1004.4 FM

UK > THE WORLD
New shows this month for the London Musicians' Collective's community arts station include Richard Sanderson and Rob Fint hosting a magazine show featuring live sessions (Baggage Reclaim, Mondays at 5pm) and Megg Hall and Jim Bookhouse hosting a late night medley of new sounds (The Lounge Of Pleasure, Fridays at midnight). New Year's Eve! Feature a 24 hour review of the year's highlights chosen by the

stations regular programme makers and including special seasonal works from performers in London and New York put together by Mick Hobbs. Musical highlights of the on-going schedule include The Wire's Adventures in Modern Music (Thursdays, 9.30pm) and shows by The Wire contributors Ben Wilson (Wednesdays, 7pm), Savage Penell (Londons, 5pm), Miles Barnes (alternates Tuesdays, 8.30pm) and Dave Mandl (Thursdays, 3.30pm). Other regular specialist music shows include Black Music (Tuesdays, noon), teenage DJ wonder Heloise Shaw (Wednesdays, 3.30pm), Simon Russell of Rough Trade Shop (Thursdays, noon). The Traditional Music Hour with Reg Hall and Friends (Thursdays, 2pm), Cultural Co-operation's London Diaspora (Thursdays, 6pm), Akene and roots music on Railing The Jack (Fridays, 3pm), Peter Cusack's Jermon Sounds field recordings show (Saturdays, 8.30pm), Nostalgia Is African Congolese music show (Saturdays, 1.30pm), Caroline Kowalski's Living A Life For A Week (Saturdays, 1pm), Harmon E Philosophy's surrealist soap opera (Saturdays 8.30pm and Thursdays, 4.30pm) and Turntable Radio (Sundays, 6pm). Broadcasts across central London on 1004.4 FM, noon-1am seven days a week with repeats broadcast outside these times. Live Web streaming and full listings at www.resonancefm.com

THE SALON

UK
Annual cultural 'meeting of minds' spread across two evenings. The first night (4 December) includes a conversation between visual art provocateur Jake Chapman and co-Throbbing Grotto and Coom Transmissions artist Casey Fanni-Turn (London Old Operating Theatre Museum & Herb Garret, 7.30pm, £7/£5) which is followed by a Q&A and visuals set by Tobi (London Horse Hospital, 9pm late fee), the second night (5) comprises outsider artist, collector and performer Joe Coleman discussing his work (7.30pm, £7/£5) followed by music from Scandinavian Ambient-industrial duo Cotten Fenne, electronics artists Dieter Mar with electronic writer Lou Miquelangelo, and all-star tribute improvisers Anal Gartner Ensemble (London October Gallery, 6pm).

WHEELS CHRISTMAS PARTY RAVE

UK
Three floor Xmas bash with one floor put together by Rephlex Records, another by Mike Paradise and Planet M, and the third by AI Records. Live performances by u-Qu, Loefletter John, Chovan, Shitmat, plus Rephlex, Skam and Lex records DJs. London Electronics, 19 December, 10pm-6am, £12 includes free festive mix CD for the first 250, 020 7637 6419, www.wheelsrecordschooves.co.uk

On Stage

ACCIDENTAL LABEL SHOWCASE

Matt Herbert label night featuring live performances from B Dogmyrto and Magpie plus Qs Harbut, Dani Sciano and Raf Rundell. London Nightosphere, 28 November, 9pm-2am, £5 before 10pm, £8 after, 020 7727 9950

TIM BRADY

December composer and guitarist performs his own works and pieces by Lorraine Cane and Joe Carter at a free concert hosted by BBC Radio 3's *After Dark* and now show. London BBC Radio 3, 30 November, 7.30pm, call 020 8576 1227 in advance to reserve tickets

BROADCAST

Elaborately detailed papers loan with support from The Projects Nottingham Rescue Rooms (2 December), Manchester University (3), Aberdeen Leman Tree (4), Glasgow King Ties (5), Leeds Gadget (7), Cardiff Club Harbours (8), Brighton The Old Market, London Islington Academy (10), Birmingham Sanctuary (11), www.broadcashtolunt.co.uk

JOHN CALE

Joe-Welvet Underground promotes his new HoboSapere album. Edinburgh Liquid Rooms (12 December), Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (14), London Shepherd's Bush Empire (15), Brighton Dome (16)

COLLEEN

Malodie French brexeler comes to London. London Arts Cafe, 17 December, 020 7247 5691

THE EX + DEERHOOF

Ardent's latest antechamber-complexity projects tour, supported by Kil Rock Studio San Francisco come on all UK (not Ireland) dates except Newcastle, Belfast and Milton Keynes. London The Split (8 December), Newcastle The Cluny (7), Nottingham The Rescue Room (8), Edinburgh Studio 24 (9), Glasgow King's Ties/Wah Wah Hut (10), Belfast Audio Annie's (12), Dublin

Wheleas (13), Cork Half Moon Club (14), Milton Keynes Zips (15), www.sokai.nl/~stardis
Deerhoof also play several additional shows: Milton Keynes Bar Central (4 December), Brighton Firebird (7), Leeds Cardigan Arts (11), and London Neeslans (12), deerhoof.kilnrecords.com

GLASGOW IMPROVISERS' ORCHESTRA

Large improvising ensemble modelled on its London sibling with in town grew out of a collaboration with 'audience' master Bunch Means. The GIO is directed by saxophonist Raymond MacDonald and will be performing improvisations, compositions as well as new pieces by Scottish composers and invited guests. Glasgow Centre for Contemporary Arts, 13 December, 8pm, £5/£4, 0141 352 4900

LONDON IMPROVISERS' ORCHESTRA

Monthly composition workshop from this all-star collective. London Red Rose Club, 7 December and every first Sunday of the month, 8pm, £5/£3, 020 7263 7265

MURCOP

Murphy Music pastoral electronic plays a one-off date. London The Split, 1 December, 020 7392 9032, www.spritz.co.uk

MURMANSK

Afternoon concert for this electroacoustic free improv group. Galloway Arts Centre, 6 December, 3.30pm, free, www.desertedvillage.com

PLAID

Harped electronics. Birmingham The Sanctuary (29 November) and Glasgow Glasgohouse (19)

SCOUT NIBBLETT

Raw/half spontaneous accompanying himself on guitar and drums (but not at the same time). Cambridge Fortlands Arms (3 December), London Water Rats (4), Leicester Sarno (5), Leeds Basement (6), Hull Fibbers (7), Liverpool Magnet (8), Glasgow Stereo (9), Belfast Audio Annie's (10), Dublin Wheleas (11), Limerick High Street (12), Cork venue tbc, 13, Bristol Dine (15), London Barfly (16), Manchester Star & Gutter (17), Oxford (venue tbc, 18), Norwich Arts Centre (19), Birmingham Jay Of All (20), www.scoutnibblett.com

SWEARING AT MOTOISTS

Raw/half spontaneous accompanying himself on guitar and drums (but not at the same time). Cambridge Fortlands Arms (3 December), London Water Rats (4), Leicester Sarno (5), Leeds Basement (6), Hull Fibbers (7), Liverpool Magnet (8), Glasgow Stereo (9), Belfast Audio Annie's (10), Dublin Wheleas (11), Limerick High Street (12), Cork venue tbc, 13, Bristol Dine (15), London Barfly (16), Manchester Star & Gutter (17), Oxford (venue tbc, 18), Norwich Arts Centre (19), Birmingham Jay Of All (20), www.scoutnibblett.com

PANGEXIA INSTRUMENTOS & MAGE EASTLEY

Portuguese and English instrument inventors join forces for a concert supplemented by the visuals of photographer Hector Alves. Rephlex Records Dis sound out the lake. London ICA, 6 December,

8pm, £10/£9, 020 7930 3847, www.ica.org.uk

THE PURPLE GRAVE ORCHESTRA

New eight-piece acoustic and electronic improvising group not ruling out the inclusion of melody and rhythm, alongside chance, synchronicity and inspiration. London Red Rose, 17 December, 8pm, £5/£3, 020 7263 7265, wdrktheatredailyhoo.co.uk

THE RECENTORS

Room improvisation for the great improvising trio of Lul' Cooks, Mike Cooper and Roger Turner on saxophone, steel guitar, radio, electronics and percussion. London Red Rose Club, 23 November, 8pm, £5/£3, 020 7263 7265

SCHEIDER T.M.

Vooder-enhanced post-rock. Glasgow Miso (6 December), Edinburgh Bangs Club (7), Aberdeen Dr Drake's (8), Hull New Adelphi (9), Nottingham Rescue Rooms (10), Stoke On Trent The Tabern Hotel (11), Leeds Hill Club (12), Manchester Night & Day (13), London ICA (14), Cambridge Rock (15), Norwich Kite De (16), Oak Oak Oak (19), Dublin Sugar Club (20) !!!

The eighth-piece New York grown collective plays a one-off date with support from MB3 London Moon Fiddler, 7pm, £11, 020 7344 4040, www.bostonmajor.co.uk

Club spaces

BOAT TING

Pre-New Year's Eve bash from this improvised and experimental music and poetry monthly based on a boat on the Thames. The Worm Post, The Tarts (Alan Tomlinson, Steve Barends and Roger Turner), Jack Off Batman (Hugh Maclellan, Jim La Bagdas, Darren Morris and Shyl' Madrigal) and Kindness May Lash. London The Yacht Club, 29 December and every last Monday of the month, 7pm, £5/£2.50, 020 8670 5094, www.boat-ting.com

BREAKIN' BREAD

New Year's Eve special from the brassbands, funk and HipHop monthly. Featuring live funk from The Melvin-influenced Baker Brothers plus guest brassbands come Children Of The Mervin. Buxton and Newcastle City Kink DJs P Brothers and residents Rob Life and Skog. London The Rhythm Factory, 31 December, 9pm-4am, £15 in advance, £18 on the door, 07867 547006, www.breakinbread.org

THE CURTION

Upstairs room in a DeFord put plays home to a weekly improv, experimental and jazz mix. Welling

from Australia is Will Guthrie who plays in a trio with ready player Rob Mills and Paul Hood on turntable, plus saxophone ensemble Bleed Crazy (5 December) and the homeloidic Gno Quintet plus saxophonist Tom Scott (12). London Centerton, 8.30pm, £4/£3, 07742 533304, molebitchy.co.uk

EAT YOUR OWN ARS CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

Entertaining London promoters' seasonal first featuring Zappa-esque popsters The Bluebeats, Mike signers Mountbatters and bluesy rock 'n' roll from The Dead 60s. Wine, gas, mulled wine, raffie and special Xmas-themed DJ sets from The Smash Mobile Disco, Fisher Christmas and The Merry Tom Toss. London Electroventures, 18 December, 8pm-3am, £9 in advance, 020 7240 0105, www.electroventures.com

FIZZLE

Fortnightly improv and experimental music space. Game Theory featuring Mark Sanders, Larry Stabbins and Pat Thomas (2 December) and Knowles featuring Andy Dennis, Chris Bowden and Dave Stoner (16). Birmingham The Old Mosley Arms, 0121 496 1664, www.fizzle.net

FLUORESCENT

Bi-monthly night of electric beats and live performance presented by the ODR label. Live performances from both Funktams and Apollon, plus De Normalisation, Phil England and Timothy Evers. The evening also includes vocal discussions from the ODR Cinema and a presentation of the label's new multimedia CD, Air London Public Life, 2 December, 8pm-late, live performances at 9.45pm, free, www.docu.co.uk/fluorescent

KLINKER

Twice-weekly improvised music and off the wall performance club celebrates its 21st anniversary this month. The Shedder, Blow Away, John Rangelos/Vel Melatice (2), Fettleage and Bypass Now Open (4), the (9), Hiccup Doozies (11), Tony Marsh/David Leach/Dave Tucker (16), Vervan Weston/John Edwards/Mark Sanders and Rhoda Davies/Armand Davies/Mark Westall (18), the (23) and Paul Taylor (30). London Sussex, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8pm, £5/£2, 020 8805 8216

KOSMISCHE CAN SCREENING

The Kosmos club presents Hahelwah, a screening of a new Can DVD (reviewed in this month's Cross Platform). Resident DJ play classic, bootlegged and remixed Can exclusively for the rest of the evening. London Upstairs at

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Out There

the Garage, 6 December, 55/6, 9pm-3am, 020 7607 1818, www.outthere.co.uk

THE LION CLUB

Leicester improvising and beyond combo Vokano The Bear supported by Shire Quentin's Garden Of Earthly Delights and The Wilson Lights. Northampton Old Black Lion, 10 December, 8pm, 03, 07906 243813

MISO

Monthly night for new electronic sound over the two floors of Glasgow's 13th Note. Features Schneider/DJ and Christ live plus DJ's a.com and Kid Twist. Glasgow 13th Note Cafe, 6 December, 0141 553 1638, www.13thnote.co.uk, www.kiowee.co.uk

ONGAKU

Occasional improvised music night featuring Japanese vocalist Amy Yashiro, AMV pianist John Tibery and saxophonist Seymour Wright playing solo and as a trio. London St Cyprian Church, 25 November, 7.30pm, 07, 574, 020 7978 8806, www.ongakusound.com

OTHER MUSIC

Sheffield improvising event featuring trombonist Paul Nabewer visiting from Germany, and The Swing/Dash Quartet featuring Budgie on drums. Sheffield The Grapes, 10 December, 8.30pm, 05/13, 0114 249 0909

REBEL IMF

Yak right for those with a leftfield bent. John Jasmody/Charlie Collins, Pleasure-Drenching Improvers, James Stephenson/Departure Leverage, Radiactive Sparrow and The Leprechaun. Leyce Screen, Seacroft Road, 27 November, 7pm, 03/11, 05, www.kickitopia.com

SPIRIT OF GRAVITY

Electronics night featuring Sprawl curator SJ (cald), Delight and N.N. Brighton Freebairn, 4 December, 8.30pm, 05/54, 01273 603974, www.sprawl.org.uk

THE SPRAWL

A truly international line-up this month at the club for those digital musics. There's a live

electroacoustic mix from Germany's Sagitt. Québécois artist Pierre-André Arcand feeding his outdoor workvortex into an audio-visual mix, and San Francisco's Nyles Lanier (aka N.Y.N.) combining dreamy computer manipulations with guitar beats. Club co-host his Garreth (aka Biffen) performs a live voice and laptop interaction, while fellow agonist SJ (out) db Dls London The Lirkhouse, 3 December, 7.30pm-midnight, 54/13, 020 7251 8787, www.djvive.com/website

TERMINAL CLUB

Two concerts organised by the Leeds collective featuring international improvisers. Game Theory featuring Larry Stabbers, Mark Sanders and Pat Thomas (3 December) and Aro Yo No Delugot, the duo of Fuchitsusha drummer and multi-instrumentalist Ikuro Takashi and butoh dancer Nao Muroto (13 December) The Adelphi, 8pm, 54/12, 019143 486615, www.400uk.com/terminal

YEA HIGH AND YEA WIDE

This month's name for the Babylon brothers' Improv and more weekly Will Gubbie & Adam Bohman, Evarcity, We're Breaking Up, Mattan (1 December), fornyto, SoundTank, Dave Draper/Marco Martini/Thibault Borge (8), Rob Mills & Nick Lubian, John Jasmody & Paul Nabewer (15), Beyond Now Open, Luftmensch, Henz (22), A Celebration Of Lemons, Wasp and Liquorice (29). London The Brompton Centre, Mondays, 8pm, 54/13, 01932 571323

Incoming

ATP: THE DIRECTOR'S CUT #1

UK
Curated by Magies, Tortoise and Shells: All three groups perform along with Sordoms, Broadcast and many more acts to be confirmed. Camber Sands Holiday Centre, 26-28 March, £110 includes chalet, accommodation, 020 7734 8832, www.atpfestival.com

ATP: THE DIRECTOR'S CUT #2

UK
Curated by Sonic Youth and Steven Malkmus & The Jicks. Both groups perform along with Jackie O Motherfucker, Erase Errata, Bardo Pond, Threaty Ensemble and many more to be confirmed. Camber Sands Holiday Centre, 2-4 April, £110 includes chalet, accommodation, 020 7734 8832, www.atpfestival.com

THE MAGIC BAND

UK
Don Van Vliet vets review great works from the Captain's table. London Royal Festival Hall (23 January) and Edinburgh Liquid Room (24), www.breehva.com

NETMAGE 04

ITALY

Fourth edition of this Italian festival. The event includes workshops and conferences on various aspects of digital art and media, plus live performances by Kim Cascone, Kostas Der Jerglaga (Thomas Reiser and Armin Tatchers), Rodericourt, Scavine, (The Use) and more. Bologna valence venus, 21-24 January 2004, www.netmag04.it

BOBBY PREVITE: THE 32

CONSTELLATIONS OF JOAN MIRÓ

UK
Jazz drummer's large scale composition accompanies a backdrop of Miró's constellation paintings. Previte also performs in a trio with guitarist Charlie Hunter and G. Legic. A Contemporary Music Network tour supported by The Wire. London Queen Elizabeth Hall (3 February). Gloucester Causton Hall (5), Birmingham CB50 8Pole (6), Cheltenham St Andrews Church (7) and Southampton Turner Sims Hall (8). More dates to be announced. www.mrntours.com

NOBUKAZU TAKEMURA'S CHILD'S

VIEW ENSEMBLE

UK
Pacific Japanese electronics curiosity on his

debut UK tour with a group featuring members of Isotope and Wipo and vocalist Aki Tsuyako who also provides computer generated visuals. A Contemporary Music Network tour supported by The Wire, Bath Michael Tippett Centre (4 February), Exeter Phoenix (5), Brighton Old Market (6), London Union Chapel (7), Nottingham Rescue Rooms (10), Leeds Warehouse (11) and Glasgow CCA (12), www.mrntours.com

THROBING GRISTLE

UK

Genesis, Chris, Casey and Sleazy reform for a one-off festival celebrating 'Industrial' music in the 21st century featuring C.K. Pan, Sank, Matmos, Lydia Lunch, Alex Empire, Jim O'Rourke, Mege Tay Team, Meadow, Richard H Kirk, Thighslanders, Soft Pink Truth, We, Big Bottom, People Like Us, Simon Fisher Turner and Paycot Deck. Camber Sands Festival, 14-16 May, www.throbbing-gristle.com

BRIAN WILSON PERFORMS SMILE

UK
The Beach Boys returns to the UK once again to perform the legendary lost album (note these are additional dates to the already sold out dates of 20-24 February). London Royal Festival Hall, 26 & 27 February, 020 7960 4242, www.bbc.org.uk

Out There Issues for inclusion in the January 2004 issue should reach us by Friday 25 November

UK Radio

National

BBC RADIO 1 9-97 PM

JOHN PEEL

Sunday 10pm-11pm midnight
Gillespie makes on the board

GILLES PETERSON

Sunday 10pm-11pm
Paul Ford jazz

FABIO A GROOVERIDER

Sunday 1-3 am longwave drum 'n' bass
Westwood RAP SHOW

Sunday 3-5pm/Saturday 10pm-midnight
Hip-hop flows

REGGAE DANCEHALL NITE

Saturday midnight-2am. Rast culture

BBC RADIO 3 9-93 PM

LATE JUNCTION

Monday-Thursdays 10-11pm
New Music compendium

JAZZ LEGENDS

Friday 4-5pm. Archive recordings

ANDY KERSHAW

Friday 10.15-11.30pm World Music

JAZZ ON 3

Friday 11.30pm-1am
Modern jazz in session and concert

WORLD ROUTES

Saturday 1-2am

Jazz Dorian presents a showcase of global music

JAZZ FILE

Saturday 4-6.30pm

Documentary magazine

HEAR AND NOW

Saturday 10.45pm-1am New Music magazine

MIXING IT

Sunday 11am-midnight
Hyper-edictic mix of avant sounds

Like to Net radio broadcasts can be found on The Wire Website www.thewire.co.uk

Regional

BBC LANCASHIRE

95.5/103.9/104.5 FM, 855 MW
ON THE WIRE

Saturday 10pm-midnight. The Wire's club columnist Steve Barker mixes it up wildlife

BBC MERSEYSIDE

96.8 FM, 1485 MW

PMS

Sunday midnight-2am. Free-wheeling mix of avant sounds

BBC SCOTLAND 92.4-94.7 FM

FROM BEBOP TO HIPHOP
Wednesday 7.15-9.05pm, Sunday 10.05pm-midnight. Jazz and its beats

CABLE RADIO 89.8 FM

(MILTON KEYNES)

THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS

Friday 10pm-midnight. Eclectic avant mix

JUICE 107.2 FM (BRIGHTON)

TOTALLY WIRED

Sunday 11pm-1am. Leftfield new music
KISS 100 FM (LONDON)

PATRICK FORGE

Sunday 1-3am. Eclectic post-punk-jazz mix
MATT JAM LAMONT

Wednesday 2-4am. Broadbeat selection

LONDON LIVE 94.9 FM

CHARLIE GILLET

Sunday 8-10pm. World Music, roots and R&B

RANKIN' MISS P. ROOMS & BLUES

Sunday 8-10pm. Strictly roots

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XFM 104.9 FM (LONDON)

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Run By

Paulo Raposo

Distribution

Sound323 (UK), Forced Exposure (USA)

Roster Includes

Johannes Schaefer, Carlos Zingaro, M. Behrens,
Armin, Witro, Arg, [De]Integration, Roca
Bernis, Zingaro, Kerkow, Sul (Various)

Brief History

Founded in Lisbon in January 2005 by
Paulo Raposo and Carlos Santos (who also
perform as the electronic music project,
Witro). Sirr has been running for two years
now, with Marc Behrens making a graphic
design input into the label, who releases
his music

Statement of Intent

The aim of Sirr is to document works by
artists who question sound in a unique way,
outside standard genre and idiomatic
boundaries, in order to challenge the listener.
Although the label focuses mainly on
electronic music, Sirr is also very interested in
acoustic phenomena, field recordings, space
and atmosphere. They admit their work goes
beyond simple documentation and into the
areas of process, context and relationships,
and as well as promoting innovative musical
forms they are interested in working both with
emerging and more established artists

Other activities

Live and recorded video projects, some of
which involve Carlos Zingaro, live
performances with Marc Behrens, Armin,
Bernis and Carlos Santos (as Witro).Spanish (Irregular) tour with [De]Integration;
running granular - a sound-image artists
organisation dedicated to promoting the
experimental scene

Future plans

New releases: Janek Schaefer, Tashya
Tsoumou, Orit Anbaroch, Ulfert Muller, Philip
Santomas, Jason Khan, Armin, Voicecrack
with Carlos Zingaro, Paulo Raposo/Carlos
Santos, [De]Integration, Marc Behrens, "in"
aka Pat Roth, (the debut CD by the Hungarian
composer), Valerio, No Me Ligne, Dedicated
to Maurice Chaboud

Choice cuts

Various Sirr, Dedicated to Chris Marker
Voicecrack/Carlos Zingaro, As Kappa

Info & manifesto: Paulo Raposo

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Epiphanies

The Passage soundtracked the Gothic horror of Manchester in the early 1980s. Hearing them made a writer out of Nicholas Royle

Below: out: The Passage

The sound of 80s Manchester group The Passage was one of footsteps gaining speed behind you on a cold night. The clipped report of metal segs thumbed into rubber soles. It was the sound of your heart beating faster as you regretted taking the shortcut down the unit back entry, school lace-ups sloping on the permanently damp cobbles. The sound of dogs' skulls clumping into rear gates that could barely contain their instinctive longing to attack anyone ghosting by. It was the soundtrack to wailing alone at a bus stop strafed by passing headlights and seeing a huddle of youths cross the road in your direction. It was a feeling in your stomach that everything was turning to shit and you were not going to get home as soon as you thought, if at all. It was the glint of an orange street lamp reflected in the oily canal, the scurrying of grit on the tow path. The sudden realisation that you were wearing the wrong uniform, the wrong colour scarf. The time was wrong, as was the place.

The Passage were not a comfortable listen. But who wants comfortable when you're 17? That's how I'd be when I first heard tracks from *Androp* (1980) on John Peel's show on Radio 1. At 17 you need music that both reflects your normal adolescent anxieties and hints at some more profound engagement with the world outside your experience. You want something a little bit frightening. Or I did, at any rate.

Out of all the dark and depressing groups that I liked at the time – Joy Division, Section 25, Echo And The Bunnymen – The Passage sounded the most frantic and haunted. They frightened me more than the others, and I felt being frightened. As long as I was safe. At home, listening to the radio, I was safe but I could pretend I wasn't. I could watch Hammer films on late night TV. I could read the Pan Books of Horror Stories. I could listen to The Passage.

Then I discovered I knew the group's guitarist. With his raven-hued pre-Phil Oakley wedged fringe, black nail varnish and silver jewellery, Andy Wilson was widely considered the wildest kid in school, but also among the coolest. He was constantly being threatened with expulsion, usually by Mr Bass, who was regularly driven to apoplexy by the reappearance of the nail varnish after previous warnings. When Andy spoke, to contest arguments over his appearance, he did so in barely a murmur, which seemed to owe more to shyness than insolence.

Intimidated yet attracted by his look, which also included an improbably low slung knapsack and a dark green old man's overcoat, I addressed Andy cautiously, and was always surprised by his shy smile and understated friendliness. When he quit school two months before taking his A-levels to join The Passage full time, everyone was predictably shocked. At a school where academic success was considered the ultimate goal, it seemed a huge gamble. What if he didn't make it?

Androp thrilled and chilled. Like Joy Division's *Unknown Pleasures*, it was exhilarating and frightening in equal measure. The classically trained Dick Wits performed most of the material himself, vocals switching between panicky whisper and desperate chant, drums beaten with a relentless passion, synthesizer lines coiling around your heart like a creeper. Wits recruited Wilson and drummer Joe McKechnie for live dates and they recorded a second album, *For All And None* (1981), that sacrificed nothing of the intensity and power of The Passage's debut while demonstrably stretching their ambition with complex arrangements and a more polished production. Ironically, Andy appeared in group photographs wearing his school jumper.

Lyricaly The Passage explored love, fear, power. Greater Manchester Chief Constable James Anderson was a favourite target ("Anderson's Hall", "Mr Terror, Chief Of Police"). For all the darkness and despair owed by the group's material, many of the songs, especially by the time of the second album, were invested with melodic hooks and infectious beats. When I moved to London in 1982, I would wander the streets of King's Cross singing to myself the words from "Lon Don" ("Oh everyone moves there/To make their careers/It fucks up ambition/It plays on their fears") and I would still feel connected to Manchester. There were sessions on Radio 1, and two more albums were released, *Degenerates* (1982) and *Enfranchise* (1983), which seemed to achieve the impossible, with The Passage becoming more poppy and more avant garde at the same time. There was even the suspicion that hit singles might not be far off. But the charts remained untroubled and The Passage eventually ran into a brick wall.

I'd always been in awe of anyone in the public domain, writing fan letters to musicians and writers I admired [Fad Gadget, Stan Barrow, even Leslie

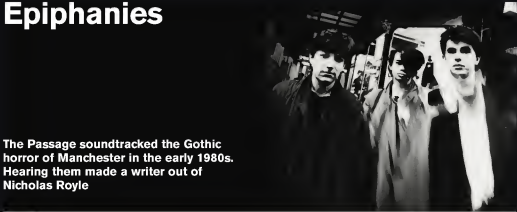
Halliwell]. Replies rendered me insensible with pleasure. As I observed Andy Wilson enter the public domain, when I saw him being written up in *Melody Maker*, *Sounds* and *NME*, it filled me with a naive can-do optimism. It didn't matter that they never had a hit. What mattered were the glowing reviews and the availability of the records in the shops.

It was around this time that I started writing short stories: tales of urban paranoia and dystopian nightmares. No one wanted to read. Editors sent them straight back. Sometimes they'd read them, sometimes they hadn't. But I carried on and after a year or so they started to gain acceptance (in the *Pan Books of Horror Stories* to begin with), and in the end writing stories wound up being what I did.

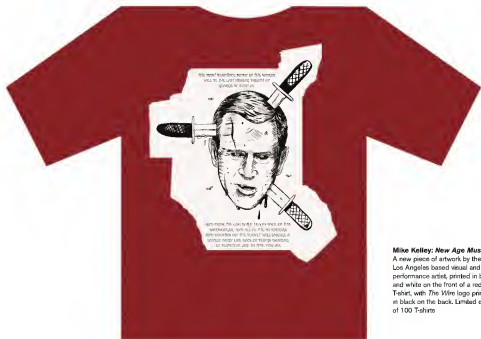
Over the years I checked the CD racks in record stores in the increasingly disconsolate hope, my turntable having given way to a CD player, that someone might reissue The Passage's back catalogue. Disappointingly I flicked past 80s acts whose work never deserved to be reissued in the first place, never mind reissued, but all that could be found by The Passage was a compilation, *Seedy* (1997), which unhelpfully jugged the chronology. Finally, James Nice's 1980s Manchester ensembles (*Crispy Ambulance* and *Section 25*, for example), secured the rights to all four Passage albums as well as singles and an extra CD of the group's excellent BBC sessions. The five CDs feature contemporary photographs and thorough sleeve notes by Nice, as well as Jeremy Greenwood's distinctive original black, white and red covers. Nice work, James. The freedom of the city of Manchester surely awaits you.

Having recently moved back to Manchester, I can now walk into an independent record shop in the northern quarter and go to the section proudly marked 'Manchester bands' where I know, for the time being, I'll find what I'm looking for.

Finally I feel ready to confess: I still have a dog-eared L4 page *Androp* lyric sheet complete with track listing that gives details of each song's subject, tense, pitch, interval, tempo and duration. I have quite a clear recollection of this artifact being given to me 23 years ago, not to keep, but to borrow. ☺ The Passage's back catalogue is available on LTM. Nicholas Royle's next novel, *Arboreus*, will be published in 2004 by Serpent's Tail.



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